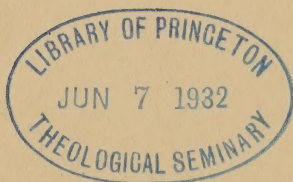


RELIGIOUS  
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RURAL CHURCH

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HENRY W. McLAUGHLIN

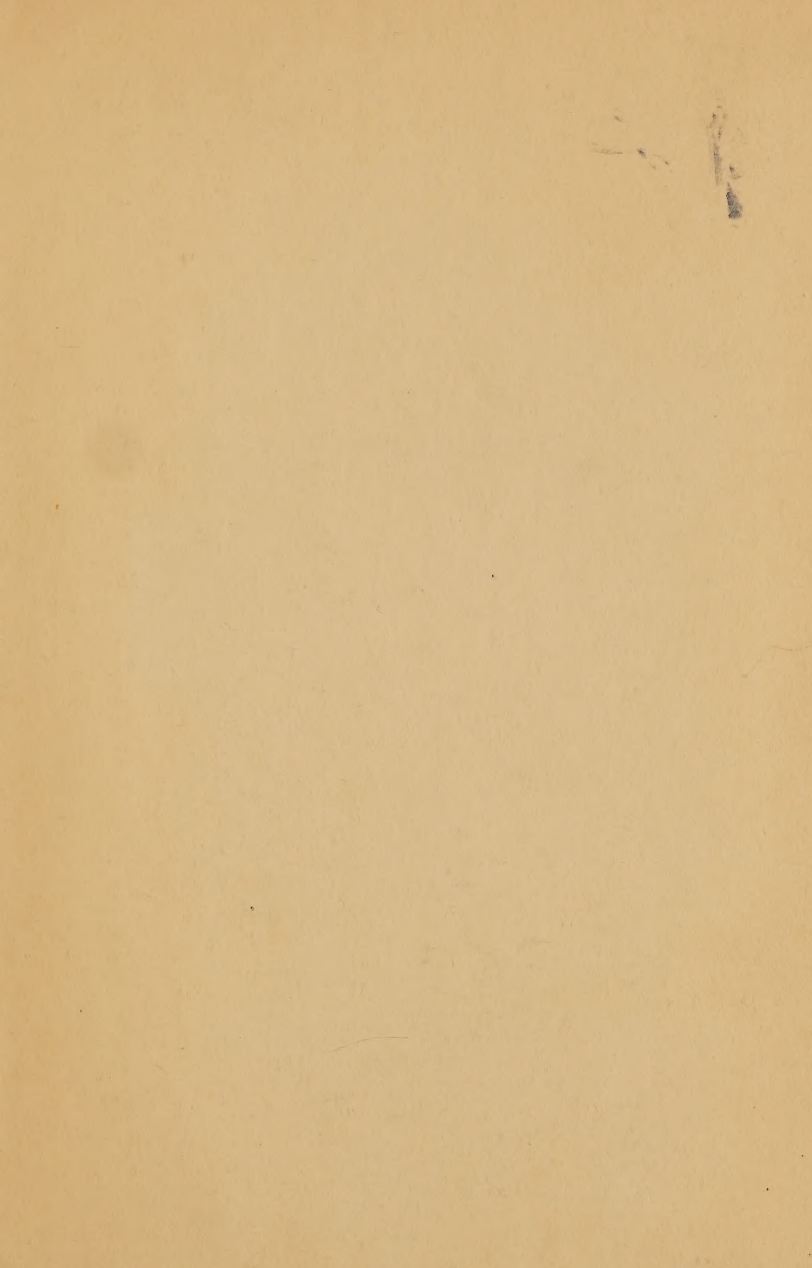


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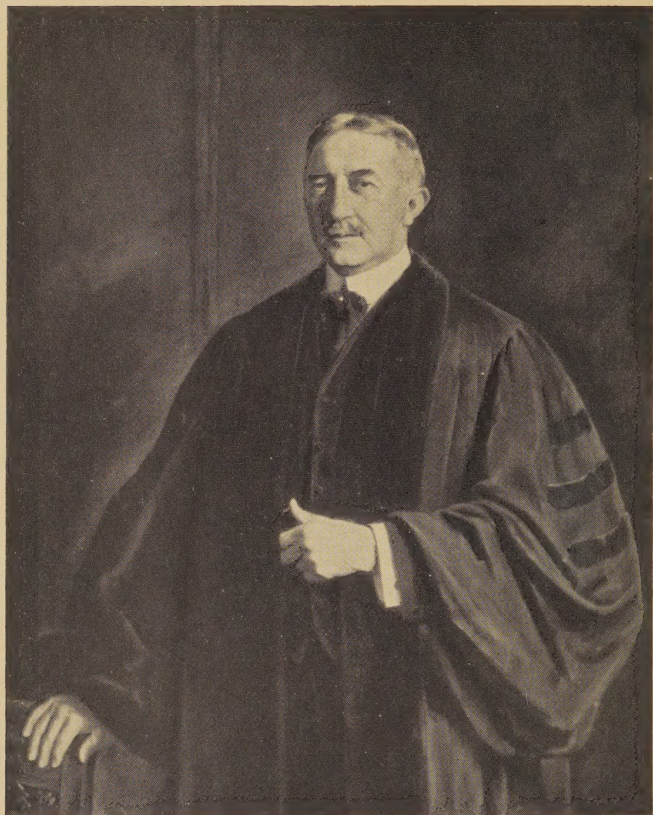




RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN  
THE RURAL CHURCH







## EDWIN ANDERSON ALDERMAN

Author, Orator, Educator, Statesman

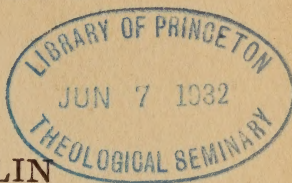
From a portrait by Eugene Speicer

"I have an ideal for this University. My desire would have it a place where the life and teachings of Jesus furnish forth the ideal of right living and true manhood." From his Inaugural Address at Chapel Hill, 1897.

"Religion and Christianity are wider and more vital forces than any expression given to them by any denomination on earth." From an address delivered before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, May 26, 1930.



# Religious Education in the Rural Church



By

HENRY W. McLAUGHLIN

*Director of Country Church Work, Presbyterian Church, U. S.*

*Author of "The New Call," "Christ and the Country*

*People," and Editor of "The Country Church  
and Public Affairs"*



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## INTRODUCTION

BY THE LATE PRESIDENT E. A. ALDERMAN <sup>1</sup>

*University of Virginia*

THE country church constitutes one of the most distinctive and powerful institutions developed in the history of American civilization. Its most colourful days are the pioneering ones in which it flourished as the central social and religious agency of the community. Our forefathers were perforce agriculturalists from the outset, and it was their faith in divine power which carried them through the perils and hardships involved in the task of subduing a wilderness. In every settlement a house of worship was erected, a country church if you please, dedicated to the worship of Almighty God. In these strongholds of faith, prayers were said, religious instruction was received, hymns of praise were sung, and wavering courage was steadied for ways which tried the souls of mankind. Their guns were never beyond their immediate grasp, even though their repentant hearts were engaged in adoration and supplication.

In those days, and in the ones which we are accustomed to call "ante-bellum," the all-day services,

<sup>1</sup> This introduction was written by Dr. Alderman just before his death. It was probably his last production for public print. He was profoundly interested in the Round Tables on the Country Church, and the date of the Institute of Public Affairs was changed in 1931 to enable him to attend without breaking into the middle of his vacation.

preaching in the morning and in the afternoon, with dinner on the grounds, furnished the occasion of a neighbourly visiting among all in the community. Here the news of the community was gathered, the success of the crops or the lack of it, the intimate affairs of the several families, approaching marriages and the usual small talk and gossip of all extended human conversation. For miles away they came, men, women and children on foot, in carriages, on horseback. But things have changed since those earlier times. The coming of the automobile, and good roads following in its wake, has made the measure of communities minutes instead of miles. The attractions of the motion picture show, the market-place, and the bright lights of adjacent towns and cities now constitute distracting interests which have attenuated the unifying influence of the country church as a community centre. In addition, the steady trek cityward of much that is best as well as worst in the rural population has left thinly settled many once flourishing rural parishes.

The country church has been forced to face a crisis as the result of all this economic and social change. The National Country Life Commission in its report to President Roosevelt in 1909 called attention to the seriousness of the problem, and the difficulties of the necessary adjustments. Since that time, dozens of surveys have been made of the country church in different parts of the nation, and a veritable library of books has been written illuminating the subject. Galpin thus compactly summarizes what has been found: "Only one-fifth of the rural population goes to church. Two-fifths of the rural churches of the country are standing still or losing ground. A quarter of all rural churches have no Sunday school. One-fifth of all rural churches are



kept alive by home mission aid. Of these subsidized churches, a large number are in active competition with churches of very similar doctrines. Seven out of every ten rural churches have only a fraction of a pastor apiece. One-third of all rural pastors receive so low a salary that they can live only by working at some other occupation. One-half of the rural churches of the country make an annual gain in membership of as much as 10 per cent."

In this connection, I desire to express my gratitude to my friend and colleague, Dr. Wilson Gee, of the Department of Rural Social Economics, for important facts and most valuable points of view. His interest in the whole subject is intense, and knowledge of it full and fruitful.

That such a situation is a serious one cannot be denied, but the church through the ages has been our most conservative of institutions, and its accommodation to changing conditions has often been slow. However, there is reassurance in the fact that since its beginning it has gone forward firmly and certainly. And there are many signs which indicate that the same characteristics hold with regard to the country church of to-day. Whether the adjustment is through the federated church, the denominational united church, the union church, the affiliated church, the larger parish plan, consolidation within the denomination, or the more adequate support of the individual church—all of these and other thoughtful plans that may be advanced do or will have merit in them—it is indispensable that the church go forward to larger achievement than ever before in the rural sections of the nation. And the chief agency in such a movement is the ministry. Platt has well said that "The ministry itself will be the chief pioneer of the revitalized

country church. When the arch of the social structure is to receive its keystone, they look for one man to place it—the modern country preacher.” Science promotes progress in material things, but in the face of the great unmapped, uncharted, unexplained, unknown, society always has and will continue to live by faith. Because of this cardinal truth, the country church and the things for which it stands always has and always will motivate all other rural institutions—the family, the school, the farm enterprise, the entire community. The necessary readjustments of a pioneer institution to a modern age are only an incident in the process. The certainty that they will be brought about in due season is assured in the leadership of such spiritually-minded, well-trained men of practical grasp as my good friend, Dr. Henry W. McLaughlin, Director of the Country Church Department of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the author of this little volume. I commend this study to you, as one that comes out of close walk and communion with God and many fruitful years of rich and successful experience in the modern country church.

## PREFACE

**T**HE books published on Religious Education in recent years would make a large library. Why should we have another volume on this subject?

The criticism has been made that most Sunday school literature and books on Religious Education have been written by people whose experiences have been urban rather than rural. One who has made a wide study of recent literature on the subject says: "Most of the modern religious education literature has been produced for the city schools by city people who have the city rather than the rural viewpoint." The answer to this is: Why do not those who have had experience in rural areas write? This book is an answer to that challenge.

The place selected for the preparation of this volume is not a city office but the open country, near New Providence Church in Rockbridge County, Virginia, where I was for sixteen years pastor. While writing I am sitting in an old log house, overlooking luxuriant pasture lands dotted with grazing flocks and herds, fields of tall waving corn, and Jump Mountain looming in the background.

The program of religious education which has become a reality in this open country church, developed by these fine farmer folk, my friends, under the leadership of Rev. C. M. Hanna, my successor, emboldens me to declare that the content of this volume is much more than mere idealism about religious education in the rural church.

The author of this book dares the venture because of his thirty years' experience as a pastor in mining villages, a small city, a large city and in the open country, and because for six years he has been making a special study of rural church work. He has read the books found on this and kindred subjects, visited over two hundred country and small town churches and studied their activities. He has discovered that their greatest weakness is in the program of religious education. This led to the decision that the topic for discussion at the Round Table in the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, 1931, should be "Religious Education in the Rural Church." This is the third of these discussions on the Country Church in three consecutive years. The first was on the Country Church and Public Affairs, the results of which were published as a volume by the Macmillan Company, New York, under the above title.

In 1930 the topic was "Rural Church Relationships." In this book the author has freely quoted from the unpublished manuscripts presented both in 1930 and 1931. The leaders for the Round Tables were carefully selected from many denominations and from various quarters of America. From their wide range of experience and much specialized study, they have brought together a vast deal of valuable knowledge. In this volume an attempt is made to digest, organize and classify the results of the many investigations of men who are selected specialists in the field of religious education. The readers of this book will find themselves indebted to all who helped to make it a reality. The participants to whom acknowledgment is made, are as follows:



Dr. Dabney S. Lancaster, Dean of Men, University of Alabama.

Prof. C. C. Haun, Professor of Country Church Work, School of Religion, Vanderbilt University.

Mr. H. W. Hochbaum, Coöperative Extension Work, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Rev. C. W. Lokey, Originator of the Edgewood Plan, College Station, Texas.

Dr. Charles M. McConnell, Boston University School of Theology.

Prof. L. Riggleman, President Morris-Harvey College, Barboursville, W. Va.

Dr. Edwin V. O'Hara, Dir. Rural Life Bureau, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, D. C.

Dr. W. H. Mills, Professor Rural Sociology, Clemson College, S. C.

Mr. John H. Reisner, College of Agriculture and Forestry, Nanking University, China.

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Dr. Rolvix Harlan, Prof. Rural Sociology, University of Richmond.

Dr. E. A. Earp, Prof. Rural Sociology and Country Church Work, Drew Theological Seminary.

Dr. Arthur Wentworth Hewitt, for twenty-one years pastor of a country Methodist Church, Plainfield, Vermont.

Dr. Luther A. Weigle, Dean of Yale Divinity School.

Dr. Walter L. Lingle, President Davidson College, Davidson, N. C.

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Dr. W. Archer Wright, Exec. Sec. Board of Christian Education, Virginia Conf. M. E. Church, South, Richmond, Va.

Rev. Victor C. Detty, Pastor of a Country Field, Wysox, Pa.

Rev. Clyde J. Walsh, Pastor of a Country Field, Dublin, Va.

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Rev. Minor C. Miller, General Secretary, Virginia Council of Religious Education, Bridgewater, Va.

H. W. McL.

*Richmond, Va.*

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## I

### FALLOW FIELDS

“**I** HAVE hearn of them things but never been to one.” This was the answer of a thirteen-year-old boy to the question: “Do you attend Sunday school?” In a beautiful valley thickly dotted with farmhouses, I was visiting with one of our younger ministers. We had picked up three boys for a ride in the car. The eldest acted as spokesman in answer to all questions. We found they attended school and liked their teacher. They were bright, attractive and alert children. They had never attended Sunday school, but were eager to attend. They promised to ask the trustee of the public school for his permission to use the building for a Sunday school. The practical difficulty would be to find officers and teachers in that community to conduct a religious school that would not be discredited by comparison with the efficiency of the country school. The older people had had no religious educational advantages and training. The public school teachers would not be available for leadership in the Sunday school as they spent the week ends at their homes in other communities.

This is but one community but it is representative of many. We have here an illustration of the tremendous need for something constructive to be done to provide religious education for the rural youth of America.

### *Places of Need*

Take last Sunday for example. The situation was the same as that of all Sundays preceding it. On last Sunday there was not a man, woman or child in any city in America who was beyond walking distance of a Sunday school. There are hundreds of thousands of them in the rural areas who were beyond walking distance of a Sunday school of any kind. There was not a man, woman or child in any of the cities, who was beyond the reach of a Sunday school, having good equipment and a trained leadership. In addition to the above, in rural areas there were hundreds of thousands of men, women and children who had Sunday schools, but without any sort of adequate equipment, and with a leadership almost totally untrained.

We do not wish to discredit the motives nor undervalue the influence of the thousands of earnest Christian men and women who, without training, are doing the best they can under the circumstances. But the character of their work on account of their lack of equipment and training, is of such a nature that the children who attend public schools with a good equipment and trained teachers, are inclined by comparison to discredit the values of religion.

For the last six years I have been Director of the Country Church Work for the Presbyterian Church in the United States, covering sixteen southern states, including Missouri. This has led me to make studies of the underprivileged areas where we have a white tenant farm population of nearly five million and about the same number of white, small-landowning people, whose economic condition, medical care, educational oppor-

tunities and religious privileges are not a great deal better than those of the tenant people. There are about six million people in the South engaged in agriculture, who might be termed among the privileged. They live mainly in communities where there are good schools, churches and proper medical care. This latter six million is the most prolific leadership producing sociological group in America, but from the ten million underprivileged we have discovered that there comes a very large proportion of law-breakers of the land. There are 100,000 rural communities in America. Sociologically they could be graded from "A" to "Z." The communities which grade up toward "A" are the leadership communities of the nation. The communities which grade down toward "Z" are the crime-breeding areas. There are in the South a little over three million Negro, farm tenant people. In Virginia 60 per cent of the Negro farm people are landowners. We have comparatively few criminals among the Negro farm people of this state and they are decreasing, while the white criminals are increasing. Criminality is largely in those states where the Negroes are worst off economically, in medical care, school and religious opportunities. With the Negroes in Virginia, the city is more of a crime-breeding area than the country. In this state a larger per cent of rural than of urban Negroes are members of the church. With the whites the reverse is true.

### *Shifts of Population*

The counties with poorer soil have decreased in population while the counties with richer soil have increased. During the ten years between 1920 and 1930 there has

been quite a movement of white peoples from the poorer lands, such as the mountains, and other sections where productivity is small, to become tenants, taking the places and living in the homes vacated by Negroes. For instance, in the richer areas of Mississippi, we find large numbers of white tenants where formerly practically all were Negroes. In many counties of the South, tenancy runs between 80 and 95 per cent of the total farm population. Sanitation, medical care, economic conditions, educational privileges and religious opportunities are usually meagre, though the equalization of the educational funds now being established by the southern states is greatly improving the educational opportunities.

### *Challenging Opportunities*

Miss Mary Joy is a college graduate, who has had special training for social service work. She went to one of the communities in a southern state, where formerly nearly all the tenants were Negroes, most of whom moved after the 1927 flood, and their places have been taken by white people. Recently I made a special visit to study conditions in this area. I found that she had visited 125 white families and listed 650 people. She had organized a Sunday school in a deserted store, beginning the first Sunday with eighty-three, this number growing in four months to 160. She organized a young people's society with about forty members, and conducted daily vacation Bible schools with very satisfactory results. There was no church of any denomination within nine miles of the location of the Sunday school, and even there services were held only once a month. It is a wonderful country. The beauty of the sun-



light as it sparkles on the river, the calmness of the lakes, the rich delta lands that yield an abundance of crops—corn, alfalfa, the other legumes and long-staple cotton. The cotton fields are made picturesque by the pickers, who with long white sacks trailing behind them, gather in the harvest. It is a beautiful country indeed, with a vast stretch of acreage dotted over with small neglected cabins. There are very good school facilities—a six room school, well equipped, taught by well-trained men and women. While the public school is up to date, with trained teachers employed, no chapel services are held and the faculty does not seem to be in sympathy with nor willing to coöperate in the promotion of a Sunday school. Education is truly a great factor in improving conditions, but education alone will not save society nor necessarily make people law-abiding. There were boys and girls ten and eleven years old in the school, who had never heard of Jesus Christ except in profanity. The principal of the school regarded with a critical eye the idea of establishing a Sunday school among these people. He said it was useless to call the people together for a religious service. "They will not come. You may take Sunday school to them in their homes but they will not come to a service. Those who have cars take 'joy rides' and those with none will not walk. It cannot be done." His attitude was probably born out of his own discouragements rather than from real antipathy to religious and moral instruction as he volunteered to give a list of the parents whose children were in attendance upon the school; but the school building was refused for any kind of religious service. However, a merchant granted the use of a vacant store-house.

Miss Joy commenced to visit among the homes. She picked up a small boy and his sister in her car, who answered with timid smiles her invitation to ride with her to their home. A conversation was begun and in a few moments the three arrived at a shabby, bare cabin, where the mother, with bright, friendly eyes, welcomed the newcomer and heard the story of the possibility of a Sunday school for her boys and girls who had never attended one. The little ones gathered around the stranger, and though shy, saw her love for them and became fast friends. Miss Joy went from this home to two others of the same type. She found in the first a group of men and half-grown boys sitting around a table at a game of cards in a dingy room, but they all freely offered their help in establishing a Sunday school. It was in the rainy season in the early spring. Field work was at an ebb. A day was set for the purpose of cleaning up the vacant store. She learned that Sunday was a day of idleness and pleasure-seeking, and that for a period of years there had been no religious services in the community. The few landowners had an opportunity of attending church services several miles distant in their cars, and some of them did so, but the poorer classes did not feel comfortable in these services where they felt such a contrast in their dress, neither did they have the means of transportation. With nowhere to go there was little incentive to do more than lie around the cabin in the same attire of the week. The members of the household, from the eldest to the youngest, were found barefooted, ragged, with unwashed faces and unkempt hair. There was a lack of cleanliness in the home. Disease was prevalent. A mother with a small baby was suffering from pellagra. On a dirty

bed a man was lying shaking with chills and fever from malaria, which is common in all the homes. The children were under-nourished. One little girl of nine years who had been sick all the summer, and was given a glass of milk, remarked: "I wish I could have a nice cool drink like that every day. If Daddy had only bought a cow when he got that old car; hit would 'a' been giving milk right now." The nearest doctor is about ten miles distant and the people are not taught healthful habits. Of course there are exceptions. In some of the homes these tenants have utilized to the best advantage the little that is theirs. It is a great relief to go into these homes where in spite of difficulties, law and order are upheld.

### *No Religion Means Lawlessness*

The stores in these communities as well as those near by are open to the public all day Sunday and late into the night. Laws seem to be but little revered. Slot machines, which the law prohibits, are in full view in the stores. On the corner of the cross-roads is a building which is presumably for the purpose of selling gas, in which was a group of men playing poker and gambling away their money, which should be used for the dozens of children who are only half clad. The men who drink to excess were pointed out to Miss Joy and she was told that they would not be present at the Sunday school because they were always drunk over the week ends, that they were often seen lying along the road "dead drunk." It was unpleasant to leave one's home because of this fact. Religious education properly executed will do more to cure lawlessness than legal processes.

### *Won by Love*

Here is a typical home, a cabin of two rooms, no screens or floor covering, four beds in one room, dirt and squalor. But notwithstanding this dark picture, the people responded in a wonderful way to the kindness, courage and sympathy of Miss Joy, who went into the homes of the people, not as a reformer nor with a "holier than thou" attitude, but as a friend and helper, ready to counsel and direct the work of the people themselves. She became a comrade to the boys and girls, sharing their joys and sorrows and ready to sympathize with the older ones as they told her the problems of the day. Through her love for the people she created in them a willingness and a desire to work with her for the good of their own neighbourhood. With this kind of an approach, the men and young boys turned out in great numbers, cleaned up the old, neglected store, and with their own hands made comfortable wooden benches. In addition to the religious work, Miss Joy is improving social conditions. The young people are given opportunities to have a good time in the right way; lawn parties are taking the place of dances and other questionable amusements. The small boys and girls are also given occasional parties. At the first one held, a little girl said to the worker: "We have had such a good time. It was just like Christmas! Everybody was so happy together." Often Miss Joy has noted an earnest effort on the part of the young people to live the principles that she is trying to inculcate.

### *Showing Results*

In the daily vacation Bible school, the young people were trained in Bible, worship, song, prayer, patriotism,



health, handwork and recreation. A fourfold program was given that might develop them physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. A closing program was provided that the parents might visualize the results of the lessons learned. It is only as the parents see the fruits of these seeds sown, as these young people take up their daily task, that they can realize the benefits derived from such a school. Miss Joy says: "For instance, one of the older girls on leaving the school one day announced the loss of her sterling silver 'vanity' compact. The children eagerly searched, a word was dropped as to its value, and the worker, knowing that among her pupils lurked the trait of stealing, was concerned over the state of affairs. This occurred on the second day of school. As little as possible was said and the school was dismissed without finding the article. Several days later, after lessons on stealing had been learned, a young girl of twelve years handed to the owner her prized piece of jewelry. The worker was amazed, yet thoroughly convinced that the seed that was being sown in the hearts of the boys and girls was truly taking root.

"Another incident gives proof of the good influence of the daily vacation Bible school. In the 'handwork' period it was purely accidental that one boy dropped a can of paint from such a height that it was scattered here and there. The director was trying to remove the paint from her arms and clothing, not noticing that one boy had left the room until he returned with paint smeared over his face, head, arms and clothing. He had been trying to remove it with water at a pump. Without a word of anger or a remark to the boy who was responsible for the accident, he had left the scene. It



was a task to get all of the paint from his face, ears and hair, but through it all he was calm, and one was sure that he was practicing the principles that were a part of the Bible school. He was a good soldier practicing the golden rule. In his absence the other boys and girls were told of the incident, that they too might learn the lesson of self-control.

"The people are poor but offerings are taken in the Sunday school and League. The worker is desirous of bringing to the people a sense of worship through giving and of developing the thought and knowledge of God as the Giver of all to Whom we owe a part of our substance. One father of very small children, whose home is many miles from the mission, gave \$1.00 for literature that he might have a part in the work even though his children had no way of attending the services."

On the hottest afternoons during the summer months, men and women may be seen walking for miles down the dusty roads, carrying babies in their arms. When asked if they would care to discontinue preaching services until cooler weather, the answer was in the negative.

What further plans are being made by the worker? She sees ahead visions of weekly mother's meetings, of special study courses in Bible, missions, and leadership training, and of various activities as the interest continues to grow. In less than two years her vision has materialized into a church in a shady plot of land. It may be the means of the continuous growth of an active group of happy, consecrated Christians, by its very presence in the community inspiring other lives to turn aside from the path that leads to destruction into the path that leads to everlasting life.

What reason has the worker to believe that such an organization will bring about so great a change in the community? Wherever a church has been erected for the purpose of true worship of God, its spire like a great finger pointing upward to the Father of All, human beings are brought closer together in a common bond of brotherhood, with love predominating. Where love is, God is, and where God is, crime and disorder will be overcome.

To prove that there has already been a change, the words of some of the influential men and women in the community are quoted:

"The men are not lying drunk in the roads as before."

"The men have stopped drinking or else they are keeping in their homes while drunk."

"Mr. S. is coming to church, though before the Sunday school was here he was dead drunk on Sundays."

"Our worker has done more good in the community than anything that has ever been done before."

"My tenants have given me less trouble—not so much fighting."

### *Mountains of Ignorance*

Professor C. C. Haun, Professor of Country Church Work in Vanderbilt University, has had an unusual opportunity to study first hand and through his students, religious educational conditions in rural areas. He writes:

"‘They’ll be saved if they’re goin’ to be saved,’ was the constant reply of a mother in answer to my entreaties in behalf of her boys’ attendance at Sunday school. A son and daughter already grown had gone to the city without joining the church or becoming interested in

religion, but this woman, though far above the average in intelligence, could not reconcile her theology with practical facts.

"Closely related to this viewpoint and characteristic of folks in large rural areas, is the idea that the revival is the main agency in leading people into the Kingdom of God. Regular church services are conducted for the joy of the saints once a month and the Sunday school is permitted as an activity for young people, but the 'big meetin'' remains the principal event of the year.

"Of course almost no generalization holds true for the entire United States. Many communities in the North, for instance, would not tolerate an evangelistic campaign of the pioneer type. They have preferred a more peaceful death and have been receiving their reward. Thousands of country churches, with and without Sunday schools, in New England and the North Central states, have been going out of existence while their people become pagan.

"For fifty years or more the Sunday school has been the main instrument of religious education. Many people think of it as being universal and would be surprised to find from the government census of 1926 that less than one-fourth of the United States population is enrolled in the Sunday school. Religious leaders were also surprised to find from this census that the ratio of membership in the Sunday school to population had declined during the ten year period between 1916 and 1926. Intensive studies show that rural membership runs below the national average.

"Three-fourths of the people in rural communities are not receiving systematic religious training through the Sunday school, week day religious instruction, the

family altar, daily vacation Bible school, or through any other systematic agency. Assuming the value of this training, the need stands out like endless mountains of ignorance.

"History has demonstrated the fact that the finest civilizations have been built upon the lives of those who have most perfectly embraced the Christian religion. In these instances the virtues of honesty, justice, integrity, purity and trust in God as revealed in Jesus, have produced peoples of the finest quality. Finding in our land vast numbers of country neighbourhoods where these virtues are not taught or practiced rigidly and where organized religion has degenerated, then the needs should arouse us. With three-fourths of the people in rural America indifferent to religion or ignorant of its values, the national leaders should ponder over ways and means by which the situation may be changed."

### *The Need Stated*

Dr. George T. Waite, Executive Secretary Virginia Baptist Board of Missions and Education, writes: "There is much territory yet to be claimed. The surveys made under the auspices of the Southern Baptist Convention reveal the fact that very few rural communities are reaching more than half of their possibilities, and those that are counted as belonging to the number reached are poorly taught.

"Temporary and part-time pastorates together with poorly trained pastors have militated against the progress of the country church and its educational program. Our rural churches in large numbers have only once-a-month preaching. It was disclosed by the

Ozark Survey that 67% of the churches had only once-a-month preaching. Many of them have either untrained or poorly trained pastors who have no vision or appreciation of the values of an educational program, and little ability to lead in this important work. And even where the rural churches have trained pastors, in most cases the pastors are only there until they can get a call to the town or city. In the rarest cases do we find a pastor who trains himself for the country or expects to remain for life in the service of rural churches. I fear our seminaries are partly to blame for the city-mindedness of our preachers. I was recently talking with a graduate of one of our largest seminaries, and he said the question was asked by the professor of one of the classes, how many of the men were willing to go to the country. Only two or three hands were held up in response. Thereupon the professor said, 'I do not blame you.' Moreover, in the curricula of most of our seminaries no adequate provision is made for the study of such country church problems as differ from those of the city church.

"There is the glaring need of more adequate physical equipment among our rural churches for educational purposes. Most of our country churches are yet worshipping in one-room buildings. It was found in the Ozark Survey, that of the 1,144 churches, 965 were one-room buildings, and about 17,000 of the 24,000 Southern Baptist churches are one-room buildings. In this day of progress it is impossible for a church satisfactorily to meet its educational responsibilities by such inadequate and antiquated provisions.

"But the most important of its many needs is a better grade of lay leadership. The churches must see to it



that they have a more competent administrative and teaching staff or they can never hope to cope with the situation. This need is accentuated by reason of the fact that great strides have been made in the improvement of public school education. This makes the church by comparison show up to a much greater disadvantage. A young person who has the privilege of sitting from Monday to Saturday in a class taught by a college-bred man or woman, will not be interested in a Sunday school class presided over and taught by one who is wholly uneducated. The country church must find a way to overcome this tragic situation if it is to successfully cope with the problem. By far the most important factor in the Sunday school, as in any other school, is the teacher."

### *A County Study*

Professor C. C. Haun reports the results of the investigation of one of his graduate students as follows: "He made a study of the status of religious education in X County, Tennessee. The churches of this county were measured in terms of their leadership, physical equipment, organization and program. Our findings show that this is an average county, not only for middle Tennessee but also for the South in general. It has two small urban centres with population above 2,500, but they are dependent mainly upon agriculture even though industry has been increasing during the past few years."

### *Untrained Leadership*

"X County possesses 98 churches which are served by 48 trained and untrained ministers who give all or a portion of their time to religious work. Only 12

ministers have had college and seminary training, while 21 have had neither. 23 or nearly one-half of the preachers have other occupations. There are 12 ministers who reside in the county and give full time to one church. When we think of three churches in a total of ninety-eight having this leadership, then we may imagine the need. If in addition, we should look into the type of schooling which was received by these few trained, resident ministers, then the prospect for improved religious training throughout the county would seem very remote.

"The lay-leadership is almost entirely untrained. Out of 476 Sunday school teachers, only 84 have attended any kind of a leadership training course, and only 12 hold diplomas in this type of work."

### *Lack of Equipment*

"Seventy-eight of the Sunday schools are conducted in one-room buildings where the classes meet in the open corners with practically no special equipment. Outside of the larger towns there is only one church which provides individual rooms for each class. Of the 96 church buildings in the county only five or six, all of which are urban, could be rated as having good equipment, including such items as individual class rooms, space for social and recreational purposes, sanitary lavatories, satisfactory heat and light, tables, chairs, blackboards, maps, musical instruments and facilities for handwork."

### *Organization Needed*

"Using the Southern Methodist plan of classifying Sunday schools according to organization, this county has none of the A type, 4 of the B type, 2 of the C

type and 92 of the D and E types. More than seventy-five per cent have a membership of fifty or less and conduct not more than four classes which meet in a one-room building. Eighty-three Sunday schools are conducting worship of the old type for the entire school in one group.

“Other organizations having religious educational value, total for the county: 24 young people’s societies, such as the Christian Endeavour, 33 women’s aids, 2 mission study groups and one boy scout group. The church service should be listed in this group and it is interesting to note that 9,275 people attend out of a population of 26,241, or approximately one-third. The average attendance per Sunday would not be more than one-third of this number, that is one-ninth of the county’s population, due to the fact that 68 churches have one or less preaching services per month, 19 churches bi-monthly service, while but 11 churches have services every Sunday.

“The average attendance in the Sunday schools which meet in most cases weekly throughout the year, is 4,704 or less than one-fifth of the population.”

### *Interpretation*

“Our study as a whole showed religious education to be on such a low level that we naturally raised questions about this county, but we found it about average, not only in its religious institutions but also economically, educationally and in other respects.

“The church statistics agree closely with other studies of wider areas. For instance, our results were compared with the study made by Morse and Brunner in their volume on ‘The Country Church in the United States,’

and in the same questions covered by each survey, results were found to be very similar. In each case three-fourths of the church buildings were found to be of the one-room type. With these results checking so closely, I feel that we are pretty safe in generalizing for the South and probably for the nation in using the concluding statement of Mr. Ballard in his study of religious education in X County: 'Religious education in X County stands at a low level as compared with secular education and also in the light of the material progress which the county has evidently made in the past two decades. Viewed from the standpoint of the adequacy of the church's physical equipment, the thoroughness of its organized life, the effective, constructive and dynamic make-up of its present program, and the efficiency of its ministerial and lay leadership, religious education of the present type in X County is inadequate.' This statement is very mild because we did not want to hurt the feelings of folks or appear to be hunting for a bad case."

### *Deficient Types of Religion*

Too much of our religion, on the one hand, is of the emotional kind which has not rightly related itself to the every-day practices of the people; and on the other hand, the ceremonial and formal type which lacks the dynamic that makes for the transformation of life. It has been too often zeal without knowledge or knowledge without power. But education divorced from religion has proved to be a national menace. Ideals and practices of chastity, truthfulness, honesty and loyalty are found to be just as low among the educated of America as among the uneducated. In fact, loose-living, divorce

and crime are more prevalent among those who have had the privileges of the schools than among those who have not been so favourably circumstanced. There is an old adage which is still true: "Education with religion is the greatest blessing—education without religion is the greatest curse."

Many who have made a critical survey of our educational system have the conviction that intellectual training apart from moral and ethical development is resulting in an abnormal product which is actually threatening our civilization. We have looked upon the privileges of education as the inalienable right of every American citizen, but too often the moral deviate has used education as a weapon with which to menace society.

The lowering of moral ideals, the prevalence of divorce, the fact that human life and property are relatively more unsafe in America than in any other civilized country in the world, and the annual crime cost of more than thirteen billion dollars are sufficient evidences to prove that education which makes but little room for moral and spiritual values really defeats its own ultimate aims. These facts should startle us to action.

Social efficiency is secured only when there is a normal and well-balanced development of all the human capacities. Many have contented themselves with the thought that all is well, for they have said: "The school provides the children with secular education during the week, while the church gives them moral and spiritual training on Sunday."

We have been rudely awakened by some of the facts revealed to us by the 1926 Federal Census of Religious Bodies. Outside of the cities of 25,000 or more population, 47 adults out of every 100 are not members of any



church,—Jewish, Mormon, Christian Science, Roman Catholic or Protestant. A surprisingly small per cent of the people in the United States are enrolled in the Sunday schools.

When we come to the matter of attendance we are disheartened. We find it is exceedingly disappointing when we scrutinize the character of the religious educational work done in the Sunday schools; and sometimes the instruction from the pulpit is even worse. Attendance is so irregular and the lack of system and efficiency in religious education is so general that it is not surprising that we should discover that, while we may know the sciences, may be versed in history, mathematics, etc., we are a nation of ignoramuses in religion.

### *A Religious Knowledge Test*

There is the most shocking ignorance of the Bible and ethics even on the part of people who have been attending the Sabbath school all their lives. If any doubt this, let them make an experiment for themselves by testing out the pupils in any public high school in America, or the students in any college or university of our land who have not had any training in parochial schools or church-controlled colleges. Let anyone who is interested in the experiment try these students with a list of questions on ethics, religious knowledge and Biblical truth. Repeated experiments in different parts of the country, where very primary examinations have been given on religion and ethics to state-trained pupils, reveal ignorance of the most shocking nature. The average group of students on an examination of this kind will average less than 50 per cent grade.

The Department of Rural Sociology at the Virginia

Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia, under the leadership of Dr. William E. Garnett and Dr. Charles H. Hamilton, recently made an investigation of the religious knowledge of the youth of the State of Virginia. The religious educational and ethical tests are as follows:

“ READ THESE DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY

“ On the following pages are 60 incomplete statements about persons and events in the Bible and about moral or ethical questions. Immediately following each incomplete sentence are four possible answers, only one of which is correct or most suitable. Read carefully each incomplete statement and the four answers following it, and after choosing the answer which you are sure will complete the statement correctly, place an ‘ X ’ in front of that answer. If two answers seem correct, mark the one that seems most correct or suitable. If you place an ‘ X ’ in the wrong place, place an ‘ O ’ in front of it and then make a new ‘ X ’ where it is needed.

Examples:

1. Noah was the builder of ..X..the ark. ....the  
tabernacle. ....the temple. ....the walls of Jeru-  
salem.
2. Isaac was Jacob’s ....brother. ..X..father. ....  
uncle. ....cousin.
3. How many gospels are there? .....one. ....three.  
..X..four. ....six.

BIBLICAL INFORMATION TEST

Now proceed:

1. Jesus was born in:  
.....Jerusalem. ....Capernaum. ....Bethlehem.  
.....Nazareth.

2. The New Testament was originally written in:  
       .....Latin. ....Greek. ....Hebrew. ....Syriac.
3. Jesus was a:  
       .....fisherman. ....farmer. ....carpenter.  
       .....shepherd.
4. The first Christian preacher who preached in Athens, Greece, was:  
       .....Stephen. ....Paul. ....Luke. ....Barnabas.
5. Saul of Tarsus gave his consent to the murder of:  
       .....Daniel. ....Joseph. ....Stephen. ....Peter.
6. The story of the Good Samaritan teaches us that our neighbour is the person who:  
       .....has done us a favour. ....lives near us.  
       .....is traveling. ....needs assistance.
7. The parable of the Prodigal Son teaches:  
       .....God will take vengeance on those who disobey Him. ....God forgives those who return to Him.  
       .....young men should stay at home. ....every boy must sow his wild oats.
8. In the parable of the Ten Virgins, five of them were shut out of the wedding because:  
       .....the bridegroom was selfish. ....they were so careless as to run short of oil. ....there was not enough food for all. ....they were too poor to buy extra oil.

What words are left out:

9. 'Let us run with.....the race that is set before us.'  
       .....courage. ....patience. ....hope. ....persistence.

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10. 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His.....'  
.....righteousness. ....generosity. ....mind.  
.....law.
  11. In what city did Paul find an altar inscribed to an  
unknown God?  
.....Antioch. ....Rome. ....Athens. ....Eph-  
esus.
  12. The Book of Acts is:  
.....a collection of Paul's letters. ....a collection  
of early Christian songs. ....the story of the fall  
of Jerusalem. ....a history of the early church.
  13. Who is called the beloved physician?  
.....Apollos. ....Luke. ....Matthew. ....Ste-  
phen.
  14. Acts was written by:  
.....Luke. ....Paul. ....Timothy. ....Barna-  
bas.
  15. The 13th Chapter of I Corinthians deals with:  
.....faith and courage. ....love and charity.  
.....salvation and forgiveness. ....baptism and  
consecration.
  16. Who sold his birthright for a good meal?  
.....Samson. ....Esau. ....Joseph. ....Jacob.
  17. The story of Cain and Abel shows the consequences  
of:  
.....insincerity. ....lust. ....carelessness.  
.....jealousy.
  18. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are called:  
.....kings. ....patriarchs. ....prophets.  
.....judges.
  19. The Old Testament was first written in the:  
.....Latin language. ....Hebrew. ....Greek.  
.....Syriac.

20. Who is known as the great law-giver of the Hebrew people?  
.....David. ....Solomon. ....Moses. ....Jesus.
21. God gave the Ten Commandments to the Hebrews through:  
.....Isaiah. ....David. ....Moses. ....Paul.
22. Who asked God, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'  
.....Absalom. ....Cain. ....Esau. ....Lot.
23. The first king of Israel was:  
.....Saul. ....David. ....Solomon. ....Hosea.

Who said:

24. 'Entreat me not to leave thee . . . where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God.'  
.....Esther. ....Ruth. ....Mary Magdalene.  
.....Deborah.
25. 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.'  
.....Samuel. ....Hezekiah. ....Jacob. ....Rehoboam.
26. 'The government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'  
.....Paul. ....Isaiah. ....Hosea. ....Zephaniah.
27. Who was David's close friend?  
.....Saul. ....Gideon. ....Jonathan. ....Isaiah.
28. The prophet who did not want Israel to have a king was:  
.....Elijah. ....Amos. ....Samuel. ....Elisha.



29. Jonah was chastened because:  
.....he refused to preach to foreigners. ....he was a false prophet. ....he did not worship Jehovah. ....the Lord wished to try his faith.
30. The Book of Job is a drama which deals mainly with the mystery of:  
.....salvation. ....suffering. ....future life. ....love.

## ETHICAL DISCRIMINATION TEST

(Use Same Method of Answering as You Used in Bible Test)

1. Cheating on examination:  
.....is all right if the majority do it. ....is all right if there is absolutely no chance of being caught. ....is all right if the teacher gives an unfair test. ....is never justified under any circumstances.
2. Lying to one's parents is:  
.....occasionally necessary. ....quite often necessary. ....never necessary. ....is all right if you do not get caught.
3. A person calls you a liar after you have told the truth. You should:  
.....call him a liar and dare him to call you another. ....reason with him and then ignore him if he persists. ....beat him up if you are large enough. ....say and do nothing at all.
4. A boy who accidentally breaks out a window belonging to someone else should:  
.....keep quiet if no one knows who did it. ....lay the blame on someone else who is suspected. ....offer to pay for the window. ....promise to be careful in the future.

5. In order to be a Christian it is necessary only:  
.....to believe the church creeds. ....to follow the teachings of Jesus in all phases of life.  
.....never to do anything immoral. ....to live an upright moral life.
6. The Golden Rule applies to all phases of life except:  
.....in our relation to animals and material things.  
.....international affairs. ....our relation to other  
.....races. ....business affairs.
7. In case of an automobile accident for which you are to blame, you should:  
.....let the other party take it to court. ....pay all damages on the other party's car. ....if possible, not let the other fellow find out who hit him.  
.....do nothing if the other fellow thinks he is to blame.
8. The practice of young men bumming automobile rides across the country:  
.....is immoral and unchristian. ....should be done in only unusual circumstances. ....is a highly desirable way for them to travel. ....should neither be condemned nor encouraged.
9. It is wrong to gamble because:  
.....the winner gives nothing in exchange for value received. ....we shall probably lose more money than we win. ....Christian people do not approve of it. ....The Bible says it is wrong.
10. Selfishness is sinful because:  
.....society is based on mutual helpfulness. ....it gives the selfish person what he wants. ....selfish people are always unpopular. ....the Bible says it is wrong.

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11. If a man has become immensely rich through dishonest means:  
.....it is all right to steal it from him. ....we are justified in using same methods for getting rich.  
.....he should not be criticised if he builds hospitals and colleges. ....we should be honest in our dealings with him.
  12. A certain farmer in packing his apples places the best specimens near the top and the poor ones in the bottom where the buyer cannot see them. This practice is:  
.....all right if he can get by with it. ....wrong because he will lose money in the end. ....wrong under any circumstances. ....all right because the buyer makes allowance for such things.
  13. If a storekeeper gives a boy too much change, the boy should:  
.....keep it because the merchant should be more careful. ....keep it but use the money for a good purpose. ....return it in order to show his honesty.  
.....return it because to keep it would be theft.
  14. The practice of "petting" or "necking" by young people:  
.....is not wrong nor injurious. ....is injurious physically and morally. ....is a legitimate recreation. ....is a sign that youth are going to the devil.
  15. Divorce is becoming more prevalent in America. Christian people should, therefore:  
.....condemn all divorce except for the Biblical reason. ....take a neutral stand on such problems.  
.....give support to the movement for companionate marriage. ....help to educate youth in problems of marriage and the family.

## RURAL LIFE PROBLEMS TEST

16. There are four Protestant churches in a small rural community where one could render better service. Christian people should, therefore:
  - .....refuse to support any of them. ....support one church and try to make it the strongest church.
  - .....try to consolidate or federate the four churches.
  - .....all join the strongest church.
17. If farmers have poorer schools than a near-by city:
  - .....the farmer should raise the local tax rate and get better schools. ....nothing should be done because farmers do not care for much education.
  - .....more city and state taxes should be allotted to rural schools. ....farmers should send their children to the city schools.
18. If wholesome recreation is lacking in a community, Christian people should:
  - .....go elsewhere for their recreation. ....take a neutral stand on such problems. ....work to develop better recreation. ....condemn all types of unwholesome recreation.
19. A farmer who keeps his children out of school to help with the crops is usually doing wrong:
  - .....because the law says that they should be in school. ....because he is doing an injustice to his children and society. ....because society has no business interfering in family affairs. ....because the farmers can make a living without child labor.
20. In view of the present agricultural situation, farmers can best raise their income by:
  - .....obedience to God and supporting the church.
  - .....coöperative buying and selling. ....electing the right men to office. ....increasing production.

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21. A country boy or girl should belong to a 4-H club because:  
.....it will help them make more money. ....it is the best way to get social life and recreation. ....it will educate them for rural citizenship and leadership. ....of the chance to win high honors in state fairs and contests.
22. If doctors' fees are high and medical services hard to obtain seven miles out in the country:  
.....a law should prohibit higher fees for country people than for city people. ....the church should help pay rural doctors' bills. ....nothing can be done to alleviate the situation. ....doctors' and other medical attention should be furnished by the state for rural people.
23. If bankers and business men make more than a fair profit out of handling farm products, farmers:  
.....are justified in failing to pay their debts to such men. ....are justified in postponing their debts as long as possible. ....should meet their debts as promptly as possible. ....should take advantage of such men at every opportunity.
24. A town of 2,000 people spends \$30,000 per year on churches; \$18,000 on schools; and nothing on organized health work. More should be spent on:  
.....health and less on the schools and churches. ....schools and the same amount on churches and health as before. ....health and schools and less on churches. .... churches and health and the same as before on the schools.
25. Property is assessed unequally in a certain community, the larger tax-payers being favoured.



Christian people should:

- .....condemn the practice as a rank injustice.
  - .....avoid the question because large tax-payers support the church. ....be absolutely neutral on such questions. ....work together to gradually change the situation in accordance with justice.
26. In a certain community Negroes are not allowed to vote (violation of the 15th amendment; and there is flagrant violation of the National Prohibition Law (based on the 18th amendment):
- .....the violation of both laws is justifiable.
  - .....violation of the 15th amendment is more justifiable than violation of the 18th. ....violation of the 18th is more justifiable than violation of the 15th. ....both laws should be equally enforced.
27. More coöperation is one of the greatest country life needs. The church should, therefore:
- .....consolidate with other community organizations. .... not be concerned because its task is to save souls. ....encourage spirit of coöperation in preaching and religious teaching. ....advise its members to join marketing organization.
28. Christian people can best help to raise educational standards by:
- .....working for liberal contributions to church schools and colleges. ....encouraging young people to attend church schools and colleges. ....working for an efficient state and country school system. ....seeing that the compulsory school attendance law is enforced.
29. The minister and Christian people can best help in the problems of dependency and crime by:
- .....helping to form public sentiment for adequate

- public welfare work. ....taking more initiative in seeing that laws are enforced. ....building up church institutions for the poor and homeless. ....praying for those who are poor and criminal.
30. Christian people and ministers can best help in the elimination of sickness and disease by:
- ....praying for the cure of those afflicted. ....seeing that vaccination and sanitation laws are enforced. ....educating the public to appreciate the value of public health work. ....building more church hospitals."

Try the above examinations or a similar list of questions of your own on the young people of your church. You will find it will interest them very much, and is good entertainment for a church social. Have someone read the questions and have the young people answer them on a piece of paper, by number. If you prefer, they may work in pairs.

In these tests about 25 per cent gave the correct answers by guessing one of the four possible answers. In other words, if the questions had been asked outright with no possible answers listed, the students would have made scores much lower. The tests were taken by 1,143 white pupils in 21 different high schools, located mainly in cultural centers in Virginia, where there are numbers of churches and Sunday schools far above the average. They made 51.4 per cent. on Biblical and 57.2 per cent. on ethical knowledge. Deducting questions answered correctly by guessing had the examination been given straight out, these students would have made a much lower per cent. on the Biblical and ethical tests. The highest average made by any high school in the state

was by Ingleside Seminary, which is a parochial school for negro girls, located at Burkeville, Virginia, whose average on Biblical knowledge was 70.4 per cent. It is supported by the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. All twenty-one of the white high schools examined, were state-supported and controlled. The highest average on Biblical knowledge was made by the one located at Charlotte Court House in a very cultured community, and even here, the average attained was only 59.2 per cent.

The same examination was taken by 743 college students in thirteen white Virginia colleges. The church-owned and controlled schools made a higher rating than the independent or state-owned and controlled institutions. The average of the thirteen institutions in Biblical knowledge was 65.6 per cent, and in ethical knowledge 70.7 per cent. The Biblical knowledge for the six independent and state-supported institutions was 60.7 per cent, that of the seven church-owned and controlled schools was 74.5 per cent. The ethical knowledge of the six independent and state-supported schools was 70.35 per cent and of the church-owned schools, 72.29 per cent. The independent and state-owned schools for men where the examination was taken by 202 students, showed an average of only 52.65 per cent in Biblical knowledge and 65 per cent in ethical knowledge. It must be remembered, however, that part of the questions were answered correctly by guessing on account of the way in which they were asked.

We have truly a wonderful system of public education from the primary schools to the great universities; but the national experiment has proved that education alone will not produce a citizenship that will guarantee a de-

mocracy that is safe for the world. In order to do this we must have men and women who are chaste, trustworthy and patriotic. The lack of chastity destroys the home, the lack of trustworthiness destroys business and the lack of patriotism destroys government. If the foundations of home, business and government are undermined, what hope have we left for the perpetuation of our civilization? If the nation is to be saved from the internal enemies which threaten its destruction, some method of education in religion and ethics must be discovered and put into execution. The strategic point of attack for this new movement should be in the rural areas, because here is the most acute need. The equipment, the training of the Sunday school and religious teachers, and the money for their support, are far more inadequate in rural than they are in urban areas.

## II

### A FERTILE FIELD

**T**HERE is much in the farm family that integrates the work of the church. A congregation in the country composed of farm families can accomplish its work in the promotion of the Kingdom of God easier than anywhere else. The oldest institution in the world is the farm family. Older than the state, older even than the church. The church and the state were both born in the bosom of the farm family. In the dawn of human history we have a portrayal of the farm family and find man as a family having control over the earth and its productivity. We quote from the best authority we have:

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. . . . And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.”

Adam became a tiller of the soil and of his two sons it



is said: "And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."

The fact that God developed the church in the homes of the farmers, seems to make it easier, if it has a qualified leadership, for the church to function where its constituency is composed of families with the same pursuits as the religious pioneers of the Old Testament.

### *The Parable of the Unwise Farmer*

There was a farmer who had four fields. One was capable of producing only one-fourth of a bale of cotton; one, one-half a bale; one, three-fourths of a bale. But there was one which was capable of producing two bales. This farmer gave more attention to the cultivation of the first three fields than he did to the one which was capable of producing two bales. He was the unwise farmer.

A certain Protestant denomination is the unwise farmer. It has left the most fertile and potentially productive fields almost fallow. These are the fields in which are living the farm families of America.

Evidences are abundant to prove that the same amount of money, time and personality spent in the rural areas are yielding a larger return in the building of the Kingdom of God than anywhere else, but in the face of these facts many of our denominations are spending in money five and six times as much per capita to provide religious opportunities and privileges for the people in the cities as they are spending for those in the rural areas. In addition it is a generally accepted custom that all the choice leadership, the most eloquent pulpiteers, the best qualified organizers go to the urban centres. There has been a very common conception abroad that if

a minister is not fit for anything else he will do for the country.

It has been thought a big work could be accomplished only in the city. This is a mistake. It is an exploded theory that a country church cannot put on an efficient program for the building of the Kingdom of God. The 1931 Minutes of the General Assembly, of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. show that there are 114 rural pastorates which during the year had an average spiritual birth rate of 10.7 per cent. Only one city church in the entire Assembly with a membership of over 400, exceeds the spiritual birth rate of 10.7 per cent and that is the First Presbyterian Church of Beckley, W. Va., of which the Rev. J. L. Lineweaver, D. D., is pastor. The large increase in the membership on profession of faith in this church is due to the fact that it has taken care of its "Judæa." Dr. Lineweaver has two assistants. He has so organized the men of his church that he is conducting in the rural areas around Beckley, nine outpost missions. These are on an average, 4.4 miles from the city.

If you will again consult these minutes you will find that in the list of churches having a membership of 500 or more, the church having the highest spiritual birth rate is in the open country. It even exceeds the First Church in Beckley. It is New Providence Church in Rockbridge County, Virginia. Rev. C. M. Hanna is pastor. This church during the year received 85 persons on profession of faith in Christ, which gives it a spiritual birth rate of 12.8 per cent.

If you will list the churches having a membership of between 400 and 500, you will again find that an open country church outdistances all the rest. It is Glade Spring, in Southwest Virginia. Rev. D. B. Wathall is the

pastor. This church reports a membership of 475, and has received during the year 65 on profession of faith, which gives it a spiritual birth rate of 13.6 per cent. Mr. Walthall is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Davidson College, an A. M. graduate of the University of Virginia and a fellowship graduate of Union Theological Seminary, Virginia. His wife is an A. M. graduate of Duke University and a graduate of the Presbyterian Training School for Lay Workers. They are living in an open country manse and like it. The country church is their deliberate choice. And where could they find a greater opportunity to labour? Here is the fertile field.

### *The Changing Times*

The question has been asked: Do good roads, automobiles, privileges of education, and other transforming factors which have come in this new day, help or hinder the country church? The answer is: They do both. If the church does not have an adequate program and a qualified leadership, it will not be able to survive the influences of these changing times. But in this new day, if the rural church has an adequate program of worship, preaching, teaching and social service, with a minister who has gifts which would enable him to develop and maintain a city church, all these new factors in the life of the farm people become integrating and not disintegrating influences. There was never a time when a real preacher and a man of dynamic, spiritual leadership could gather a larger congregation in the rural areas and develop better a rural church than now. The trouble is, we have too often left the fertile field fallow or committed it to the tillage of incompetent hands. The country church of to-day needs a qualified leadership.

*Family Solidarity*

Bishop Edwin V. O'Hara, who, for many years, has been the Executive Secretary of the Rural Life Bureau of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, says: "It has often been observed that farming is more than a means of making a living; that it is at the same time a mode of living. The truth of this statement has special reference to the relation of the farm to family life. It is not merely that the farm provides a site of ground upon which the family resides in close propinquity to its work. City families may reside near their place of occupation. The farm does something more. It provides an environment for the family in which economic and social forces work to maintain certain family standards which religion has always regarded as peculiarly desirable, indeed, essential to family life. These standards affect both the constitution of the family and its functions. The keystone of the arch of family life as viewed by religion is unity."

The unity of the farm family is a vital factor which makes the rural area a fertile field for the activities of the church. The farm family is one of solidarity—the husband and wife were probably reared in the same community, their parents and their grandparents on both sides were probably engaged in agriculture. They are bound not only by a common inheritance but by common interests. The two families are probably members of the same church, with the same beliefs and common ideals. The husband and wife, probably sweethearts from childhood, are sweethearts to the end. They naturally grew into each other's lives. And then the large families of children in the average farm family constitute

a unifying factor. Children on the farm become an asset at an early age, while in the city they are a liability until they graduate from school. On the farm they grow to manhood and womanhood as apprentices of their parents.

Dr. C. W. Grafton, who, for fifty-nine years, has been minister of an open country church in Mississippi, in speaking of the adverse experiences and trials which have come to the community of Union Church, of which he is pastor, says: "Do you wonder how it is that an old country church that has suffered so much from death and removals could possibly survive? Now and then one asks that question and the answer is very easy. Our old country church grows from within. During all these years the movement has always been outwards and scarcely a family has moved into our midst. Union Church is strictly an ecclesiastical endogen. To wit: John McArn married Lizzie Wilkinson and they had twelve children and they are all members of Union Church. Peter Wilkinson married Mary Faris, and they have ten children and they are all members of Union Church except one that we gave to a Baptist brother. J. E. Lamb married Lenora Gillis and had thirteen children. Jim Currie married Mary Warnock and had eleven children. H. J. Fairley married Jane Buckles and had thirteen children. John Daniel Blue married Eliza McLean and had eleven children. At a glance one can see that these six families with sixty or seventy children would go a long way toward keeping things lively in a community.

"In all these families there is scarcely a bad one in the whole lot. None of them will ever go to the poor-house. Two or three candidates for the ministry, some



bright young doctors, some teachers, merchants, farmers, etc. All show the good blood that is back of them. The question has been discussed a great deal as to how to keep a country church alive. There is really but one answer: Contrive a way to keep the young farmers at home and let them raise corn and peas and cattle and children, and the country church will be saved. If some wise man could put this suggestion into practice, he would be the greatest benefactor of the church-at-large."

On the farm in the average farm family the husband and wife are business partners and their children are junior partners. The city man has his office down-town, but the country man has his office at home. In speaking of the city home, Justice John Ford, of the New York County Supreme Court, says: "A home does not mean what it used to mean, because people are born in hospitals, entertain in clubs, eat in restaurants, take visitors to cabarets and are buried from funeral parlours."

It is very different in the country. The husband and wife and children work out their problems together. He is the director of the farm, she of the garden, the poultry-yard and the house, and from her labour there is a return from the vegetables, eggs, chickens, butter, etc. Many frugal housewives pay all the grocery bills and more. Some years ago there was a lad in a country home in West Virginia, who had an ambition to go to college. His father said: "We have a little farm here and Henry can make a living on it. If we send him off to college and he gets a little knowledge in his head and becomes too proud to work, we do not know what will become of him." The mother, anxious for him to realize his ambition, would frequently discuss the problem with his father. The father in a moment of weakness said:

"Well, if you pay his way he can go." He did not know how much money she had. She said: "I'll do it. I have saved enough from my eggs and butter to provide for his expenses for one year in college and after that we will see what will happen." Henry went to Washington and Lee University and made the rest of his expenses through college on scholarships. He became Henry White, Ph. D., D. D., LL. D., the Professor of History at Washington and Lee University and later Professor of Greek Exegesis in Columbia Theological Seminary.

This introduces us to another factor which we will discuss later. It is found in the potentialities of rural youth for leadership.

Not only are all the members of the farm family bound together by the community of interest which grows out of their pursuits, but they are in constant fellowship around the hearth of the open fire. Radiators have been a disintegrating influence in the unity of family life. Where we have radiators, each member of the family may go into his own room, but where the heat comes from a common hearthstone, there is fellowship, either in reading, studying or in conversation. The lamp, the common table around which the family gathers, is also an integrating power for the unity of the family.

Then the farm family gathers three times a day for meals at the common board. In the average city home the pursuits of each member of the family are often different and their hours are so varied that they take their breakfast at different times; they eat their lunch down-town and frequently not even all of the members of the family gather for the evening meal.

The family that gathers around the open fire, that

uses the same light, and daily has fellowship at the meals, can more easily maintain the family altar than the one in the city which is scattered by the multiplicity and complexity of conditions in our modern urban civilization.

In the country we seldom find homes broken by divorce, and it is here that we discover contented, happy families where the fathers and mothers have splendid comradeship with their children. This is true, especially if the country church is functioning and the farm families have become an integrating part of it. Many of the advantages of the farm family are vitiated when they do not have the vitalizing, integrating influence of the church.

#### *Lessons from Agricultural Extension Service*

Among home owning farm families is the easiest place to demonstrate what parents can do in performance of the task of religious education. Much may be learned from the methods of the Agricultural Extension Service. Dr. H. W. Hochbaum, one of the directors of the Office of Coöperative Extension Work, Washington, D. C., says:

“Do you know the coöperative extension system? This is a nation-wide system of rural education with a central office in every state, a national office of extension work in Washington, and local offices in about 2,400 of the 2,880 agricultural counties of the country; 6,000 extension workers are employed and the sum of over \$23,000,000 is expended annually in maintaining the system. The basis of the system is the local county extension agent or agents who live in the county in which they are employed. Thereby they learn the specific situations

and needs of their people and work continuously with them. These agents are the field representatives of the state agricultural college, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the local people. They work with the people right on their farms and in their homes, stimulating interest in local farm and home problems, and teaching the solutions to their problems. These agents are supplemented and reinforced by a corps of state supervisors and subject-matter-specialists who work with the agents and local people in analyzing and meeting the larger problems which may be holding back the development of rural life in a county."

Some rural church leaders are adopting the methods of the Agricultural Extension Service in promoting religious education. They are encouraging selected families to study religious education and to make a practical demonstration after the fashion of the 4-H Club experiments. The success of the 4-H Club movement has depended upon securing the interest and coöperation of the parents in a seven-day week program.

The Agricultural Extension Service grew out of the boll weevil scourge which swept over Texas during the first decade of the present century. The distressed farmers appealed to the Department of Agriculture in Washington. Dr. Seamen A. Knapp was sent to them for counsel and advice. He instituted experimentations in Texas and other southern states. Out of these grew the Agricultural Extension Service. It did not become a functioning factor in the national life until a Federal appropriation was provided by the Smith-Lever Bill, which was passed by Congress, May, 1914.

The agricultural extension service, therefore, is only "sweet sixteen." During these sixteen years, under the

able leadership of men like C. B. Smith, O. B. Martin, J. R. Hutcheson and others, the service has shown marvelous developments. Its functions in the beginning were mainly for the purpose of increasing production; it endeavoured to make two blades of grass, two bushels of corn, two bales of cotton grow where one grew before. It now concerns itself with the whole program of the welfare of the people who live on the farms. It has, therefore, become a vital factor of national advancement for the farmer who stands at the source of things. Whatever promotes his interest, advances the well-being of the whole nation. There is an old Chinese proverb which reads: "The well-being of a people is like a tree; agriculture is its root, manufacturing and commerce are its branches and its leaves; if the root is injured, the leaves fall, the branches break away and the tree dies."

The hope of an abiding, prosperous nation, the security for the permanence of our civilization, the guarantee for the perpetuity of a democracy that is safe for the world, is to have living on our farms a contented, happy, prosperous people, rearing families in homes where healthful, intellectual, moral and spiritual values are preserved as a priceless heritage.

### *Source of Leadership*

It is remarkable that such a large proportion of our leaders in education, statesmanship and religion, come from the farm families. The country must not only produce its own leadership but also furnish its share of the leadership in the cities.

As city children have so many more advantages than those reared in the country, we would naturally expect them to excel their rural cotemporaries. The city



people have hospitals, libraries, art galleries, museums, music halls, wonderful schools, with selected teachers, marvelous churches with picked preachers and paid workers. The city people have very much more money to give their children the advantages of travel as well as college and university education. A city child has better sanitation, more balanced diet, more adequate medical attention, better recreational facilities, and naturally we would expect better specimens of manhood and womanhood. As the children in the cities have the advantages of multitudes of organizations, such as community clubs, Young Men's Christian Associations, and Young Women's Christian Associations, boy scouts, girl scouts, etc.; as they are provided with superior schools, more efficient teachers; as it is in the cities we have more perfect equipment in the churches, and superior programs of religious education, more inspiring music and preachers, it is natural to suppose that the people in the cities would be greatly superior to those in the country—superior physically, mentally, culturally, morally and spiritually. But are they? If not, why not?

We in our urban thinking have gotten the idea that the city is a place which spells opportunity and privilege, while the open country is synonymous with hardships, handicaps, drudgery and despair. Why is it that in spite of all these difficulties and obstacles, we find so much of the nation's leadership coming from the farm? It is because the country has its compensations. The farm family enjoys many blessings which are not available in the cities. We find that in the rural areas there are fewer counter-attractions, fewer things to absorb the interests of youth. It is easier to reach and mould young people in the rural areas than in the cities. Country young

people have certain natural advantages, such as sunshine, fresh air, space and time to think. We are just beginning to learn the wonderful health influences which come to us from the rays of the sun and the re-creating breath of the air of the open country. There is no other place quite so good for the training of the mind and the culture of the soul as the open country.

The child in the farm family has also certain social advantages, such as the opportunity to learn to do things through employment in tasks suited to the stages of his development without the harmful effects of a sense of drudgery which comes to the urban child in the continual grind of doing one thing over and over again in industrial life. The rural child has the opportunity to learn the value of things. He has an abundance of wholesome food, but little money to spend. He learns to overcome and meet discouragements. Drought and crop failure teach him patience and perseverance in the face of what often seems impending defeat. He also learns to meet and overcome obstacles. The boy on the farm, when the harness breaks, must mend it himself, if he must do it with a hickory withe or a baling wire. The boy in the country, when his Ford goes wrong, must fix it with his own hands and by his own ingenuity. The boy in the city, when his Pierce-Arrow gets out of order, sends for the garage man. These advantages which the child on the farm has, are some of the factors which contribute to the production of leadership. These boys and girls of potentiality on our American farms constitute the most imperious challenge to the church to provide for them adequate religious privileges.

"Who's Who In America" is made up of men and women who are supposed to be national leaders, but al-

most without exception they are individuals who have attained distinction while living in the city. Notwithstanding this fact, a large proportion listed are sons and daughters of farmers. Hampden-Sydney College, in Virginia, has a larger per cent of its living alumni in "Who's Who In America" than any other institution in the United States. More than 76 per cent of the fifty-six graduates of this small college, listed in the fifteenth volume of "Who's Who In America," were born in rural communities. Of the fifty-six living graduates listed, only ten were born in American cities and three in cities of other countries.

"Rus" is a book in which is listed the "Who's Who" of country-life leaders. A study of this volume reveals that very few rural leaders were born in the city.

### *Home Ownership*

There never was a time when it was easier and cheaper to become a farm owner in America than now. Even in pioneer days, when the land was practically given to settlers, they had to clear it, fence it and erect their buildings. These had all to be done by hand. If paid for at the present monetary rate for labour, their farms cost them very much more than they can be purchased for now. In many sections of the country, good land can be bought for less than the fences and buildings on it would cost, to say nothing of the labour and expense which was incurred by our pioneer ancestors in clearing their fields. Our forefathers, wherever they cleared their fields and plowed their acres, builded and maintained their country churches.

Denmark had a time something like the present in America, when it was possible for all the people to own

their own farms. The people of Denmark availed themselves of the opportunity. Now is the time to buy a farm and have a home on it, even if you have an industrial pursuit. When there is no job anywhere else, one can always be found that will yield a return for work to the man who owns a farm and lives on it. It is also a satisfaction to know that the rent is not running on when one is out of a job. Home-owning farmers may never grow rich but they will find a happy, satisfying life and have an ideal home in which to rear their children. The farmer who owns his home and works his own land will use more intelligence in the use of fertilization and of farm machinery than he would as a tenant. By trading work with the neighbours one can have the use of up-to-date machinery which may be possessed jointly. By working together as the pioneers did in their log-rolling, house-raising and quilting parties, they can greatly cheapen the cost of production. This will be true, especially if they use the knowledge which has been made available by our farm journals, agricultural colleges and agricultural extension service. On account of the superior intelligence and character of American farmers they can produce and market their crops at less cost than it would cost in other countries where the farmers are of low intelligence and ignorant of improved methods of agriculture and marketing.

### *God's Plan for Farmers*

Dr. William Hayne Mills, Professor of Rural Sociology at Clemson College, South Carolina, says: "Instead of seeing in Numbers and Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the story of the wandering of a people and their proposed settlement under a Theocracy, let us see also that this

Divine wisdom settled this people in the promised land 'according to their families.' Let us follow this land-holding scheme throughout the Old Testament. We shall find that God settled His chosen people upon the land in such a way as to make them a nation of small owners with their farm lands inalienable. Suppose the Church had always taught the corollary of this fact—that among the Jews large landed estates handed down from father to son were impossible—impossible because God ordained it so. How great suffering, how dreadful misery would the world have been thereby spared? Suppose the Church should even now teach that Almighty God approves that every farm family should own its farm land, what quick disappearance tenancy would make. When one learns the efforts the governments of the world are putting forth to get land into the ownership of their citizens, the effectiveness of the Mosaic law is truly a proof of its divine origin and authority. So tell the man with the hoe that God's plan was for every farm family to own its land as a perpetual possession; that the Church proposes once again to say: 'Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field'; that it proposes to assist him in securing the ownership of a farm, will 'the upward-looking and the light' come back to his face?

"The prayer that millions pray, has one petition most people use with some understanding—'Give us this day our daily bread.' Man does not live by bread alone, but most certainly he lives by bread. Who provides it? Do you answer, 'God'? Then a moment's reflection will show you that it is God working through second causes. God and man work together to fill earth's hungry mouths. The petition is really that God will continue His gracious providence of sunshine and rain, of seed-



time and harvest and that He also will guide the farmer in his work. Vision the little children of the earth crying for bread, and over against them these words from Psalm 104: 'He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine and bread that strengtheneth man's heart.' Inquire how the gracious Father in Heaven supplies these wants, and you will find the answer in Isaiah 28: 'Does he that ploweth to sow, plow continually? Doth he continually open and harrow his ground? When he hath levelled the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches and scatter the cummin, and put in the wheat in rows and the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in the border thereof? For his God doth instruct him aright and doth teach him.' Let the Church teach the farmer that he is peculiarly in partnership with God, and that his labours are guided and blessed by Him, who 'watereth its furrows abundantly, who setteth the ridges thereof, who blesseth the springing thereof, who crowneth the year with His goodness so that the pastures are clothed with flocks and the valleys covered with grain.' God and the farmer working together to give daily bread—that is the picture the Scripture draws. Let the Church reveal the glory and beauty of it to its farmer constituency, till he shall acknowledge himself a blessed and happy man."

Dr. E. C. Branson, in his charming book, "Farm Life Abroad," written after making a study of conditions in Denmark says: "The day is approaching in every land when the only effective bulwark against destructive socialism will be in the land-owning farmers in the country regions and the home-owning wage and salary

earners in the cities and industrial centres. Civilization is salted unto salvation by the home-owning, home-loving, home-depending instincts."

### *Divinely Placed Responsibility*

What has home ownership to do with religious education? Much in every way. The divine teaching about home ownership is vitally related to family life.

The home-owning farm families, producing a major part of the goods consumed by themselves and diversifying their crops so that they may be seasonably employed for each month of the year, constitute a population which affords the finest sort of an opportunity for a demonstration of an ideal program of religious education. The easiest place for the Church to operate is in the country community where the families dwell on their own farms and do their own work or trade work with their neighbours. In such a community there are no sharply drawn social distinctions, no family is over-rich and none is exceedingly poor. In communities like this religious educational leaders have an opportunity to formulate and execute experiments in religious education that ought to produce the most satisfactory results. Here fallow but fertile fields lie ready to produce abundant returns, waiting only for intelligent cultivators.

To meet the needs in the rural areas there must be a properly trained and rightly motivated leadership. A program of religious education in the rural church should include within its scheme of operation a thorough training of parents for the propagation and practicing of religion in the home, a consistent and continued training of leaders for the church school, a church school with good equipment, properly graded and functioning, daily

vacation Bible schools accommodated to rural psychology and formulated to meet the needs of rural peoples, and finally, week day religious education, carried on by a competent and trained leadership with a curriculum for all of the grades in the schools and conducted co-extensive with the school terms. Such a program may be worked out only when we have a ministerial and lay leadership divinely called, Spirit filled, amply trained, and with lives definitely dedicated to this task.

In the constitution of the family the responsibility of education in religion was placed upon the parents. While we recognize the value of the church school, the daily vacation Bible school, week day religious education, and other agencies for education in religion, they should not relieve parents of the divinely placed responsibility.

Listen to the prophet Moses as he speaks, saying:

“Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

The New Testament teaches that parents should bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Are people better educated in religion now than they were a hundred years ago when the family was considered the prime religious educational agency? Is it true that in the development of important and praiseworthy modern agencies for religious education, we have allowed the functions of the home to atrophy?

*Parents Should Be Trained*

Dr. Ralph S. Adams, for a number of years director of Country Church Work for the Reformed Church in the United States, now Professor of Rural Church Work in Bangor Theological Seminary, Bangor, Maine, and secretary of the Inter-Seminary Commission for training the rural ministry, began his career as a farm agent.

With reference to the training of parents as leaders in religious education, he writes as follows:

“The most important task of Christian education and moulding Christian character rests upon the parent in the home. The early impressions of childhood gathered in the family circle are often the impressions that last longest and reach deepest into the life of the individual. It is of greatest concern, therefore, that these impressions be of the best, of the most wholesome. This requires an intelligent understanding of child nature, of child guidance, of child instruction. It also demands a knowledge of the highest ideals and goals of life and how to attain them. We believe these to be found in the religion of Jesus Christ, and through Christian education we attempt to pass them on to others. The most effective time and place for giving such instruction is at the time life is being lived and experienced, in the intimate, normal and natural contacts of life. Both in intimacy and in favourable life stage, the home offers the greatest opportunity for religious guidance and instruction, whether it be by formal teaching, by storytelling, by Bible reading and prayer, or by example and atmosphere. No social agency, not even the church and the Sunday school, can take the place of the home in the magnitude of its religious opportunity. The home

remains the basic unit of society and must be the focal point of all religious and character education. The parents need to be given every chance to prepare themselves for the great task and opportunity which is theirs.

"And how does the church fulfil its rôle in this important program? It has assumed the whole task of religious education and placed it in the Sunday school. Little or no effort is made to secure a coöperating partnership between the Sunday school and the home in performing the task of religious instruction. Home contacts by teachers are almost extinct. The minimum effort is put forth to discover the intimate home relations and influences of the pupil, and to prepare the parents to guide the child in these relationships. What a need for intelligent, trained leadership in the rural church and Sunday school this situation presents! Vision and right attitudes will be the greatest assets of the rural leader in solving this problem. Methods at first may seem remote and insufficient to the demands, but perseverance in the right approach will yield the methods."

### *Parents' Classes*

"Parents' classes in the duties of the home, in child psychology, in child guidance, in recreational and social life in the home, in sex education, in home relations and free discussion, outside reading, home projects and programs, will more than replace the lecture method of instruction. A well-prepared and intelligent leader of this group is essential. If such is not now available, what is to hinder the pastor from preparing himself for the task or selecting a likely leader and prevailing upon him to prepare for it? Speed will be made in this enterprise by taking time for preparation of the leader."



### III

#### TRAINING THE LABOURERS

**I**N the ninth chapter of Matthew we have an account of a tour which Jesus, the Master Teacher, made of the agricultural towns and villages of Galilee. He did four things: He healed the sick, taught in their synagogues and preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. The results of the fourth thing He did are revealed to us in the 36th verse of the 9th chapter of Matthew: "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." The fourth thing He did was to investigate. He discovered two facts, first, the multitudes were in the country; second, they were without a qualified leadership. Ask any country pastor: "What is your most serious problem?" He will answer: "It is the lack of trained and competent leaders." When Jesus saw the multitudes as sheep scattered abroad without a shepherd, He did more than merely have compassion on them. He did something about it.

As Director of Country Church Work in the Presbyterian Church, U. S., I travel over the sixteen Southern States. There is nothing more beautiful than the cotton fields whitening under the stars, ready for the ingathering. What is more pathetic than to see the cotton field go down in the face of a storm because there are no labourers to make the ingathering? There is nothing

more beautiful than the cotton field unless it be the grain field, ripening in its golden glory on the hills, waving in the wind like the ripples on a lake. What is more pathetic than to see the wheat field go down in the face of the storm? It was a vision like this that the Master gave to His disciples. He called them about Him and said: "The harvest truly is plenteous but the labourers are few." He called the infant church to its knees, saying: "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." He spent three years training His disciples. He gathered them about Him and gave them power, and having called the roll sent them forth and commanded them saying: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Go to your own people, people of your own nationality who are scattered as sheep having no shepherd. He told them: "Freely ye have received, freely give." They were to teach the truths of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

### *Trained Leadership Needed*

The country people still need a trained leadership. Fields may be fertile, and capable of an abundant harvest, but will remain fallow lands unless there are labourers to break them up, cultivate and make the ingathering.

In the United States we have spent millions of dollars to train men to be better farmers because intelligent and trained farmers are capable of producing more wealth. But the church in the rural areas has attempted to carry on the important work of religious education without providing an ample training for its leaders. Leadership

training has been carried on almost exclusively in the cities. Only a few country churches have caught the vision of their responsibility. One rural church in New Jersey has the slogan, "We train our own leaders and leaders for others." What more important service can the country churches perform than to send into the city churches trained men and women prepared to take up the work which awaits them there?

### *A Changing Order*

Dr. Ralph S. Adams, of Bangor Theological Seminary, writes:

"Changing conditions in rural life have made the task of rural social organizations more difficult than ever before. Increased services, higher costs and a declining farm population make the burden of support and of leadership in agriculture a heavy one. All social agencies have felt the change, and none so heavily as the country church. There is serious danger, unless there be a great change in the distribution of the support of town and country organizations, including the church, of denying the tillers of the soil a fair share of the fruits of our higher standards of living. There are also changes in social attitudes in the country community. Improvements in transportation and communication have increased and broadened the social contacts of town and country people, and have brought them more into touch with city folk, city institutions and city standards. The countryside is in danger of the urbanization of rural thoughts and ideals; the loss of our rural idealism would be a serious loss, not alone to country folk but to the entire nation. The old community boundaries are being broken down and new ones, extending far beyond the

old, are springing up. The old community consciousness and loyalties are yielding to indifference and lack of community spirit, brought about by the more impersonal contacts in the larger community and in the city.

"The organization life of the rural community has failed to adjust itself successfully and completely to these changing conditions. Social activities and the recreation life have shifted considerably to the city and the larger town, while rural lodges and social organizations have disbanded or are inactive. Sunday schools lag behind the rest of the nation in equipment and leadership. The country church is fighting for its life, with a tremendous handicap in available support and in leadership. Such are the conditions of the instruments through which rural society provides social services.

"There is need for effective instruments and skilled operators in rural community life. The church and equipment are the instruments for developing the religious life of the community. Pastors and lay leaders are the operators, skilled and otherwise. An abundance of workers will be available if the operators are skilful. The instruments need not be of the best in order to make a start toward adequate service, for often the unskilled operator is able to improve his instruments as he works along. One of the great difficulties in our rural religious life is that we have built up loyalties to the instruments rather than to intimate social needs or ultimate social outcomes. We perpetuate small, inefficient and ineffective cross-roads churches by missionary doles and endowments, and react with horror to the suggestion that the small church—our church—lose its life in order that it may find life abundantly in a larger, united church, capable of serving the religious needs of the

community and able to secure and support an adequate leadership.

“The key to the situation is an intelligent and trained leadership, devoted to country life, dedicated to the task of building up the religious morale of the country community, and intent upon the development of Christian character in the boys and girls of the countryside. This leadership must be of three kinds—the parents, the minister and the lay leaders and teachers. All have important religious tasks to perform and all need a degree of special training before the remedies to the present rural religious situation can be applied.

“Pastors and laymen in the rural community remain largely untrained and unprepared to meet the demands of the new social life. Ideas and practices of church work remain too much as they were generations ago, and rural conservatism resists too strongly the necessary changes in church leadership and service which the more alert would introduce. The rural pastor is as much the cause of this conservative approach as are his people, for his own ideas of church leadership fail to take into account the factors which are changing country life.”

### *Lay Leadership*

The preachers and the parents cannot do everything, and religious education as it is conducted in the rural areas to-day is largely under the control of untrained volunteers. Sometimes a spirit of independence is present which has the effect of separating the Sunday school from the church program and even making it a competing agency. The fact that most of the rural churches are served by part time pastors makes it impractical for the pastor to influence in a very vital way the religious



educational program of his churches unless he trains his leaders to carry on in his absence. As Dr. Ralph S. Adams says: "Much of the time the pastor is not present in the average rural Sunday school, either because his position of leader and guide in this important function of the church is not recognized or he is busy meeting others of his many Sunday appointments. In the rural Sunday school Age is at the helm. The leaders are set in their ways and meet the suggestion of new methods or new ideas of religious education with resistance and finality. Youth, if at all present, is forced to conform to the wishes of the leaders, for the paternalism dominant in the operation of the farm and in the running of the farm home, is readily carried over to the running of community affairs. Youthful enthusiasm is interpreted as wildness and youthful desires for innovations and for self-expression are considered indications of irreverence and a lack of respect for the 'old time religion.' The teachers are without special training or guidance—a good heart and good intentions are considered adequate qualifications for teaching the spiritual principles necessary to the abundant life. The great movement of rural youth to the city also affects the type and quality of church and Sunday school leadership in the country. The opportunities for the profitable use of educational training in the rural community are considerably limited, whereas, in the city community they are limitless. Those who remain to lead the Sunday school and to teach the youth, often lead and teach from a limited educational outlook, insufficient to the demands of the situation and the needs of the day."

In one successful country church known to the author, all the leaders are young men.

*Training Opportunities Limited*

"The opportunities for training local church leaders and teachers of religious education in the country are also considerably limited. The uneducated minister, without special training for the development of local leadership, is incapable of providing an effective program to meet this need. He is unfamiliar with the methods which might produce the desired results, and he is unable to teach successfully the leadership training courses now available through the denominational boards of Christian Education and the International Council of Religious Education. There is no plan in his church or pastoral program to discover leadership ability or to provide fruitful supervision of such lay leaders as he may already have. He is unfamiliar with the technique of supervision. As a consequence, in tens of thousands of rural churches and Sunday schools, there is no program whatsoever to discover and train leaders."

Dr. William Archer Wright, Secretary of the Board of Christian Education, Virginia Conference, M. E. Church, South, in discussing town and country church leadership, says of Virginia conditions: "The city church leaders work under more favourable conditions as to equipment and background of the work. Figures are significant here: One credit was awarded to one out of four urban teachers; one out of eleven rural teachers; one out of forty urban pupils; one out of one hundred and forty-seven rural pupils.

"We might say that the average city Sunday school had last year ten persons in its organization who acquired some training. The average country school had last year one such person in its organization. Moreover, your

urban teacher on the average is responsible for only ten pupils, while the rural teacher is responsible on the average for twelve pupils."

### *Rural Teacher Training*

Dr. Ralph S. Adams gives some reasons for this condition as follows: "Many rural communities are too remote from centres of population to make it practical for local leaders to attend community training schools located in city centres. Or the time these schools are held may be entirely unsuitable to the convenience and seasonal schedule of the dwellers on the soil. These city schools frequently invite the rural churches and Sunday schools to coöperate, but the rural leaders are not consulted as to time, place, courses or instructors. In every respect they are city schools, and their students are, as a consequence, city leaders and teachers. Even though the physical distance to these schools may not be great for rural leaders and teachers, the social distance is considerable and presents an effective barrier to rural-urban coöperation in this enterprise. The rural folk feel misunderstood and are suspicious of patronizing attitudes. They are also conscious of differences in educational opportunities and backgrounds and are unwilling to contrast their educational limitations with the supposedly superior training of the city leaders and teachers. Their inferiority complex asserts itself and they remain at home. But they need the training and they should be provided with the opportunity. City leaders might well make a special effort to cultivate the interest and coöperation of the rural leaders in the very beginning of the community project, allowing them to express their preference as to time, courses and in-

structors, and especially to designate courses which would be particularly helpful to their rural situations. At least one course should be offered by an instructor familiar with country life and country church problems and intent upon studying and meeting rural needs. If the social distance between city and country cannot be overcome sufficiently to make these coöperative arrangements possible, then rural Sunday schools should endeavour to organize an area or district training school that will meet the needs of rural leaders and teachers. County and state councils of religious education, in coöperation with denominational agencies, would do well to promote such schools in remote rural communities and even to subsidize in part the instruction in these schools if able instructors are not available in the area. Before local vision can be aroused and local resources stimulated to the point of self-support in such enterprises, it may be necessary to provide the training school for a few years through funds from outside sources.

“Existing training courses may need modification to the needs of the rural situation. Either special courses and texts for use in the training of rural leaders and teachers should be provided, or supplementary literature and outlines to the regular courses should be prepared especially for rural use, or instructors should be chosen to teach the regular courses who are capable in their instruction of making the necessary rural adaptations.

“Training camps and summer schools of leadership training are also frequently beyond the financial reach of the average rural Sunday school and rural home. The value of these schools and camps in the broadening of contacts and vision of young people is immeasurable. But statistics show us that they are largely for the city

boy and girl and not for the youth of the soil. Means should be found to bring this opportunity within range of our rural young people, larger numbers should attend, and local churches and schools should plan carefully and wisely to utilize and encourage these qualities which the school or camp may have stimulated."

*Rural Attitudes Retard Leadership Efforts*

Dr. Adams gives the following interesting discussion on the above topic:

"Any effort to introduce methods of leadership training, guidance and utilization, must take into account prevailing attitudes among rural people. These must be understood and dealt with wisely. Perhaps some of them should be changed and modified, but now they exist in all their glory, resisting the usual advances made against them by impatient and unwise leaders. Rural people are inclined to be jealous of neighbours who have been elevated to positions of leadership. They recognize no differences in personal qualifications for such positions. They only know that they went to school together, are members of the same lodge, are engaged in the same occupation and always have called each other by the first name. Why should one be a leader rather than the others, and why should the others be content to follow and be workers? Cliques and community cleavages have often resulted from just such attitudes as this. Wise leadership will discover means of avoiding these cleavages and of lifting the thoughts and ideals of country people to higher levels and to less selfish motives.

"Conservatism is also characteristic of country people. They resist changes in vocational and social methods until convinced that the proposed methods are the better



way. Nor is this attitude surprising, for the farmer as no one else, is dependent upon forces and elements beyond his control. His job is out of doors, exposed to all the vagaries of season and weather. Living things are dependent upon him. His major decisions have far-reaching importance; he cannot afford to sport with innovations, for his entire crop or herd may be harmed by a wrong choice and years might be required to undo the harm. These mental attitudes are carried over into his social institutions and activities as well. He will hold to the familiar, the tried, the known, and he will resist the new, the untried, the unknown. This conservatism of the American farmer has stood the nation in good stead in the past and will be a steadying factor in the future. The approach to conservatism is through a patient, long-time educational process, whereby the fear of the unknown will be replaced by the confidence of knowledge. Rural leaders must understand the characteristics of country people in order to develop a technique and skill in harnessing these characteristics for necessary progress.

“A sense of inferiority when in a social circle not his own is another attribute of the farmer. Two factors have contributed largely to this attitude. First, the stigma of lowliness attached to his occupation because of the large amount of rough hand labour which it required in the past, and second, because of the lack of social contact, experience, poise and confidence which his social isolation and his individualistic occupation have forced upon him and his family. He will not willingly bring himself into broad contrast with the urban dweller in matters of intellect and social experience.

“An attitude of paternalism toward young people in

church and Sunday school affairs is quite common among rural adults. The father is the manager of the farm. The home is an essential and intimate part of the farm and the farm business, so that the father is inclined to be dominant also in the affairs of the home. This same dominance is readily carried over into the social life of the community and into the work of the church. In some churches it has even injected itself into the young people's society which is dominated and directed by adults instead of being run by the young people themselves."

### *Practical Experimentations*

Rev. J. B. Suttle, a Baptist minister, pastor of a group of four country churches near Shelby, N. C., has been very successful in training his leadership in religious education. There are more than a thousand credits held by the lay leaders of his congregations. Most of the classes have been taught by himself in meetings during the week. In all four of the congregations the leaders are so well trained that a teaching service is held every Sunday at which the regular offering is taken for local causes and benevolences. The exercise on these days is dignified as a church service, whether the pastor is present to preach or not.

Rev. J. M. Harris, Pastor of the Mossy Creek Presbyterian Church in Virginia, has carried several classes of his young people through the entire twelve units necessary for a Teacher Training diploma. It has been his custom to organize these classes during the high school age. As soon as a class graduates, he holds a two or three days commencement exercise securing the best speakers available on the subject of religious edu-

cation, after which he organizes a new class and repeats his program. Substandard classes are recommended by some who have tried them.

About ten or twelve years ago, there was organized in the valley of Virginia a Standard Teacher Training School in the open country. At first there were three associated open country congregations, over one of which I was pastor. Afterwards a fourth church of a different denomination was associated. All four pastors made the necessary preparation in order that they might be accredited as teachers. The schools were held in the spring and fall. The classes were held separately at each of the churches, but the opening and closing meetings were held jointly. At the beginning there was an enrollment meeting and at the close a commencement exercise with a musical program, an address on religious education and the giving of certificates and diplomas. Each pastor was accredited on a different unit which he taught in all four congregations in successive sessions. About fifty credits on an average were given, spring and fall. This custom has continued and at present nearly all the teachers in these four congregations hold diplomas in Teacher Training. What has been achieved in some country communities may be accomplished in others.

Dr. William Archer Wright, who has had an extensive experience in promoting training for leaders in rural areas, makes the following important contribution on the subject of town and country church leadership:

"An adequate leadership for the country church is so inwrought with an adequate program for rural community development and with the conception of the church as an institution whose true prosperity inheres in the production of the best type of community life, that

there are some definite conclusions warranted by the facts adduced:

"More adequate training for rural social leadership should be provided for the ministry of the church.

"General church attitudes toward the rural church and its community need a turn toward increased sympathy and understanding.

"The city church needs to be brought to a realization of its debt to the country church for membership and leadership.

"There should be a coöperative attempt to lift the cultural community level in the country.

"An educational and financial program which will positively provide a properly trained ministry with adequate support, is needed.

"Continued pressure should be brought to bear by church authorities to reduce denominational rivalry."

### *Skills in Rural Church Leadership*

On this topic Dr. Ralph S. Adams has a valuable contribution to make.

"The distinguishing marks of a Christian leader as compared with a Christian worker or citizen," he says, "are chiefly differences in vision, attitudes and skills or abilities. Leadership training consists largely in developing superior vision, favourable and impressive attitudes and superior abilities or skills in dealing with people. Some of the abilities necessary in the leadership of rural people are indicated under the topics on rural attitudes and on parents. We present a brief listing of some of the most essential abilities which should be developed in rural leaders. A good rural leader should be able:

1. To see and appreciate the spiritual stimuli in nature and the rural environment.
2. To translate these spiritual stimuli to rural people.
3. To know and to interpret to others the social and economic factors and trends in rural community life.
4. To interpret the religious life in relation to *all* of life in every-day experiences.
5. To win the confidence and to guide the efforts of other leaders and workers in religious and community affairs.
6. To understand rural attitudes and thought patterns, and to deal with them tactfully and constructively.
7. To understand the individual in his relationships.
8. To show or develop skill in the art of personal work and guidance.
9. To interpret and adapt materials, plans and literature of religious education to the needs of the local situation.
10. To be willing to fit into the natural groupings and relationships, in home and community, of those whom he leads or teaches.

“For the training of lay leaders and parents helpful results may be expected from a careful job analysis of their position, from regular workers’ conferences and a workers’ library, from teacher-training and leadership-training courses, camps, schools and community training schools, from parents’ classes and adult discussion groups, from program outlines and check-up through the use of a leader’s diary, through pastor’s intelligent and constant supervision of leaders and teachers, from survey and study of local community needs, through challeng-



ing motives and goals, through home and community projects, through class and age-group organizations, self-conducted but supervised, through opportunities offered to young people to share in the church and Sunday school program by assistant-ships, committee-ships and other forms of direct participation and responsibility.

“This list could be extended indefinitely depending upon the nature and type of the local situation under consideration. Whatever methods are used, it should be remembered that the objectives, the desired outcomes, the results to be obtained are the all-important consideration. Again, we would suggest patience, perseverance, courage and consecration in the great task which lies ahead for those who will lead the country church into a larger usefulness and a more influential position of leadership.”

### *Specialized Training of Rural Pastors*

In the United States nearly fifty-three out of every one hundred white Protestant ministers, who are serving in towns or the open country, have had neither a college nor a seminary training, and only twenty-three out of every hundred have had both. In the sixteen Southern States, where we find 56 per cent of our rural population, 63.7 per cent of the white Protestant ministers have had neither a college nor a seminary training and only 15.1 per cent have had both. The teachers in our public schools and the farm and home demonstration agents are required not only to have a liberal college or university training, but they must also have specialized training to fit them for the task of dealing with rural conditions and becoming acceptable leaders

of the country people. But few even of the educated ministers have had a specialized training for rural leadership.

On this subject, Dr. Ralph S. Adams says: "The country church has received most of the untrained pastors and under their leadership the rural church has suffered grievously. Religious education and leadership training are two important elements of the church program, but our rural pastors have had little or no training in these important fields. Theological seminaries are beginning to introduce courses in religious education, but some of the seminaries still remain without them. Even less are rural pastors prepared to understand problems of rural life and to make intelligent and effective adaptations of church methods to the changing needs of rural people. Many rural pastors have no passion for country life and can neither recognize nor interpret to others the spiritual stimuli in nature and the rural environment. Other prominent conditions in the rural ministry which retard the effectiveness of the country church and which will yield only under intelligent and persistent leadership, are the short pastorate, inadequate equipment, insufficient support, limited fields of service for men of large ability, over-churching, denominational competition, short-sighted policies of missionary administration, and the low estimate in ministerial circles of the rural ministry. All are important contributing causes to these conditions. At no time in the history of the nation has there been a greater need for rural pastors of large ability, with a love for the country, with specific training for their special task, willing to remain with the task until the leadership of the church can make itself felt in the affairs of men and

in the life of the community. Would that the country might secure an increasing number of pastoral leaders of the John Frederic Oberlin type."

John Frederic Oberlin was brought up in a university atmosphere. He was an A. B. at Strasburg University at nineteen and a Ph. D. at twenty-three. He was well versed in medicine and an honour graduate of the theological school. He declined flattering offers to become the pastor of a difficult country field in the Vosges Mountains in Alsatia. Being a great scholar and a brilliant preacher he was frequently called at large salaries to positions in the universities and city pastorates. He always said: "My place is where I can be of the greatest service at the least recompense." In recognition of his having transformed the whole countryside, he was knighted by the French Government, received acknowledgment from the Czar of Russia, and while he was never in America, a great American University perpetuates his name. He spent fifty-three years as a country preacher and has been called the patron saint of the country church. Though he has been dead for over one hundred years, the story of his life is an inspiration to every country minister who reads it.

Are all the Oberlins dead? We emphatically answer "No." There are many names which might be mentioned. One is that of the Rev. Arthur Wentworth Hewitt, for more than twenty-one years pastor of a Methodist country church at Plainfield, Vermont. He has frequently refused to accept pastorates in large city churches offering tempting salaries. Hear his own testimony. The following are extracts from his address before the Institute of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.

"In December, up in my country, the deep snows fall and the sun shines upon them till they sparkle with crystals of amethyst and diamond, except where lie the shadows, blue as a mountain lake. Now comes Christmas Eve, and we have the problem of getting the big spruce tree into the old meeting-house. We do not take the tree by the tip or by the branches. We pull steadily on the log end, and all the branches follow. But sometimes we do not take rural problems by the log end. We pull hard at the branches only. We tear at the twigs. We get discouraged.

"How then can we get hold of the log-end of the rural problem, which will draw all other incidentals after it? If the main thing is not modernity, if it is not organization, what is it? Is there one thing above all others which should be our aim for the rural church? Yes, a thousand times! It will solve the problem. There is no other solution, there never was, there never will be.

"ADEQUATE PASTORAL LEADERSHIP is the answer. Pull hard for this one thing, and you are tugging at the trunk of the tree. All else will follow. Nothing else will help in the least if this one thing is lacking. The larger the program handed to an incompetent, the more ridiculous he will make it seem. But the man of real greatness will instinctively do the near and needful act, with his eyes also on the far and glorious goal.

"A pastor does not know what the great denomination will do. He may not be sure of what he can persuade his own church to do. But as a pastor I know what *I* may do. For more than twenty years I have actually done it, and I mean to follow the trail to the end. If high salaries call from elsewhere, I can let them yell

into the unanswering silence. If there should be paths of greater honour, I can leave them for others to tread. I have seen this vision, that not till the dome at Washington is dust, is there a greater or more needful work than that of the rural ministry, and once having realized this truth, I must 'salt it down with my bones.' It is not sacrifice either. Rural scenes and rural people are dearest to me. I watch the sunset on the Green Mountains,

*'From saffron to purple,  
From purple to gray,  
Slow fades on the mountains  
The beautiful day.'*

"And I know that when the sun sets on my rural pastorate it will have been a beautiful day, for I shall have done the work which I wanted to do."

The solution which Jesus offered (see Matthew, 9th and 10th chapters) was a divinely-called, Spirit-filled, amply-trained ministry, with lives definitely dedicated to the work. No man can throw himself wholeheartedly into a task if he considers it merely an opportunity to gain experience. The best cure for the restlessness among the ministry is for a large number of them to choose the rural pastorate as a life-work just as others choose the foreign field, and then prepare themselves by specialized training for this type of service.

Just as in the case of the rural school teacher and the agricultural extension agent, the rural minister should have the best possible academic training in college and seminary, but, in addition to this, he should have a thorough course of study and supervised experience in



rural work. He should make a special study of country life problems and the best methods of solving them. Just as the teacher training schools have found it wise to give to their students an opportunity during the period of their training to observe and take part in typical rural schools, so our young ministers should have an opportunity to get their specialized training for rural work under the direction and instruction of men of successful experience in this type of work.

### *What is Being Done*

There are being conducted annually ten short-term schools for rural ministers. These are inter-denominational in administration and the constituency of the attendants. The largest and most successful of these is the Rural Church School at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, conducted each year for two weeks just after Easter. The attendance one year reached 370 rural ministers. There are usually a thousand or more applicants for scholarships to this school. The time is ripe for the establishment and maintenance of a number of these schools if funds could be made available to enable the rural pastors with their meagre incomes to attend. Small scholarships of from \$20.00 to \$25.00 each should be available for these fine earnest men who are longing for the privileges which such schools as Vanderbilt afford. Especially is this true in the South, where there are 24,878 rural pastors in the seventeen leading white Protestant denominations.

Recently there was organized the Southern Rural Ministers Education Association, whose aims and purposes are set forth as follows:

“THE AIM of this organization is to promote short term

schools to provide specialized training for rural ministers to prepare them for leadership among the country people. Said schools are to be promoted in coöperation with established institutions such as agricultural colleges, theological seminaries, etc. The schools proposed are to be upon a basis of coöperation among the denominations.

“MEMBERSHIP in this organization is open to church executives, officials and professors in educational institutions, and others who are especially interested in specialized training of ministers for rural leadership.

“THE PURPOSE of this organization is to secure money to provide free scholarships for rural ministers who may wish to attend short-term schools to give them specialized training for rural leadership.”

The officers of the Southern Rural Ministers Education Association are:

President—Dr. J. W. Perry, Executive Secretary Board of Home Missions, M. E. Church, South, Nashville, Tennessee.

Vice-Pres.—Bishop F. D. Goodwin, formerly Director Town and Country Church Department, Protestant Episcopal Church, Warsaw, Va.

Secretary-Treasurer—Dr. Henry W. McLaughlin, Director Country Church Work, Presbyterian Church, U. S., Box 1176, Richmond, Va.

The Board of Control is composed of representatives of the leading denominations doing work in the South.

This is a volunteer organization to act as a medium between donors and short-term rural pastors' schools now operating or to be established in the South. It is not a holding nor an administrative organization. Its

officers and members of the Board of Control are all workers on salaries in their respective denominations.

The money solicited will not be used for administration nor for the pay of salaried officials but for scholarships to enable rural ministers to attend pastors' schools to fit themselves for more competent leadership among the rural people.

A grant of \$5,000 on the part of Julius Rosenwald has made it possible for ten pastors' schools to be conducted for rural Negro ministers in the South. The solution of the leadership problems among the Negroes and of race relationships depends largely upon the solution of the white religious leadership problem in the rural areas. We have a feeling that nothing would do more to cure some of the very serious social ills in some sections of the rural South than the maintenance of a number of these schools for rural pastors. The country ministers are the prophets of the people, and no other leaders have a more dominant influence in determining the policies and practices of the communities in which they live.

It is not alone the question of saving the country churches. They have no right to survive unless they serve. But if they are to be agencies of uplift and transformation, if they are to provide religious privileges for the people of this generation in this new day of complex conditions, the rural churches must have a vision and a program for their task. The pastor and the program are the vital factors. They are the factors through which the Holy Spirit operates. In the promotion of the right kind of programs the preachers must be the leaders.

The Institute of Public Affairs at the University of

Virginia has a Round Table on the Country Church which has been conducted for three consecutive years. This brings together annually a number of the leaders in this important movement for the promotion of better programs for rural churches and a more adequately trained rural religious leadership. This does not duplicate the task of the rural pastors' schools, but it is intended to train leaders and to produce a literature, which should prove valuable contributory factors in making the rural pastors' schools more effective in their work.

Some of the theological seminaries have provided for lectures and short courses on the rural church. One of the finest pieces of work in this field of endeavour is being accomplished by the Inter-seminary Commission for Training for the Rural Ministry, which is operating in New England under the leadership of men like Dr. Luther A. Weigle, Chairman, Yale Divinity School; Dr. Marion J. Bradshaw, Secretary, Bangor Theological Seminary; and Dr. George P. Day, Yale University. The staff consists of Herman N. Morse, Ralph S. Adams, Malcolm Dana and Chas. S. McConnell. Survey and field work are being conducted under supervision by the students in Bangor, Hartford, Yale, Boston and Newton Theological Institution.

There is no class of leaders whose special training is more important than the pastors, unless it be that of the parents as discussed in a former chapter.

## IV

### RURAL CHURCH CURRICULUM

**I**N the first chapter we saw the need for religious education in the rural areas, under the caption of "Fallow Fields." The neglect of the rural people by the church has been deplorable. Many of the problems of both Church and state are due to this neglect.

In the second chapter we saw something of the marvelous possibilities that await the Church if it would give serious attention to the religious education of the multitudes of the boys and girls on our American farms and in our towns and villages. Here millions with potentiality for leadership wait for the transforming influences of the Gospel truths.

In the third chapter we studied how to train the labourers to cultivate the fertile but fallow fields. The imperious challenge is to train leaders, to produce leaders.

The question naturally arises, what shall we teach? How shall we proceed? By what method shall we carry on this work of religious education among rural people?

In the remaining chapters we shall attempt to answer these questions.

Every school, college and university has its curriculum. Before a program of education can be executed, there must be definite ideas of what is to be taught. To discuss adequately the curriculum of religious education in the rural church is a difficult task. It is one for



which I, who have spent most of my life as a country preacher, do not feel adequate. As leader of the Round Table on Religious Education in the Rural Church at the Institute of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, I was fortunate enough to secure the services of two experts in this field to discuss the subject of the "Curriculum." They were both very generous in giving of their time and thought in the preparation of the papers which they presented. We make no apology for presenting these manuscripts with but little revision, in this and the following chapters. These two eminent authorities are Dr. Paul H. Vieth and Dr. Albert Z. Mann. Dr. Vieth for a number of years has been prominently connected with the International Council of Religious Education and is an author and lecturer of note. He writes as follows:

"It is our purpose to interpret the meaning of curriculum as used in present-day Christian religious education, and to show some of its implications for the rural church. It is not our purpose to tell in detail how Christian teaching should be carried on in the rural church. It is for our readers to determine how a curriculum may best be developed in any particular situation.

### *The Meaning of Curriculum*

"The term 'curriculum' was given me as a part of my assigned title. I should not have chosen it deliberately for fear of appearing 'highbrow.' It is a rather high-sounding word for what in actual experience is comparatively simple and practical. Developing a curriculum is nothing more than applying good common sense to the solution of a problem—that is,

common sense refined through insight, study and experimentation. The problem is that of developing Christian personality in our boys and girls. The curriculum constitutes those influences which we utilize to bring about growth toward Christian personality. In the final analysis, the curriculum constitutes what we get boys and girls themselves to think, feel and do, for through their own activity they grow. This is sometimes summed up in the phrase 'activity curriculum.'

"Suppose I have a handful of seed from which I desire to raise some plants. There are certain potentialities wrapped up in these seeds, but to bring these potentialities to actual fruition requires that I meet certain conditions. First, I must find good soil in which to plant the seed. Second, I must make sure that the spot selected has plenty of moisture, sunshine and air. Third, I must provide the proper cultivation in order that the plants may grow most abundantly. It is only as these conditions are provided that the goal in view may be realized.

"When we think of a curriculum for the Christian growth of a child the problem is of course very much more complex. To some extent, however, this illustration will hold. First comes heredity. Every human individual is born with a capacity for God, yet people differ greatly in their hereditary make-up. It is easier for some to respond to the call of religion than it is for others. Every child has a right to be well born, and I believe that God must be interested in the kind of parents who mate to beget children. Second, comes the soil or the environment in which the individual grows to maturity. We are becoming increasingly aware of the meaning of environment in the development of

Christian personality. It is not possible for most of us to choose the environment in which we will rear our children. We can, however, do our utmost to make that environment as effective as possible for good. Third, comes cultivation or training. This consists of the things which we do to help the individual become the right kind of person whose development we vision as the goal of growth. This is the curriculum.

“When we think of the goal as being Christian living, the curriculum consists in bringing into the experience of the individual those influences which will direct his life toward Christian principles and conduct. This is the curriculum of Christian education.

“Obviously, when the curriculum is defined as broadly as this the responsibility for it is shared by a number of institutions, including particularly the home and the church. It is our purpose in this discussion to limit ourselves to the work of the church in building a curriculum of Christian education.

“The above discussion has been in the nature of a description rather than a definition of a curriculum. I think it is more fruitful to describe than it is to attempt to define in concise terms. If, however, there be those who desire a more concise definition I would offer one of the following as comprehending what is generally thought of in present day educational science as the meaning of curriculum: (1) ‘Experience under guidance’; (2) ‘The experience of the pupil consciously selected or initiated and definitely enriched and guided with a view to achieving certain objectives.’”

Dr. Vieth has here given us the principles of religious education which should be applied in ministerial training. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

*Implications of This Curriculum Theory*

"The curriculum problem of the rural church will be more than half solved when the workers in such church conceive clearly what that problem is. Let us look at a few of the implications which result from a theory of curriculum such as we have described above.

"1. *Emphasis is laid on life values.* Growth in Christian living is made the goal. This places the work of Christian education squarely on the present experience of the pupil. He is to learn to live as a Christian here and now. His response can be made only in the light of the situations which he faces wherever he may be. Educational procedure must begin with the pupil where he is, namely, with the experiences which he is now having. It is true, of course, that present experience has little meaning except as it is seen in relation to certain goals. We shall discuss these goals a little later. Let it be sufficient to point out here that these goals themselves can be stated only in terms of the conditions and situations under which the learner is living.

"This emphasis has a very important meaning for those who are building curricula in the rural church. It indicates at once that success cannot be achieved by importing ready made curricula from the outside, but that in the final analysis the curriculum must live, move and have its being in the experience of rural boys and girls for whom it is being built. Christian growth does not take place through mental comprehension of knowledge. It can take place only through enlarged and enriched experience. This of course implies the assimilation of new and wider knowledge.

"2. *This theory of curriculum lays emphasis not on*

*experience only, but on experience under guidance.* This is what we mean by teaching. A teacher is one who helps the pupil to understand the experiences which he is undergoing and to gain control over them. It is he who guides the pupil in fruitful experimentation and in the search after knowledge which will help in bringing about understanding and insight.

“Teaching of this kind is, however, very different from what may be called ‘school mastering,’ that is, the kind of drill on mere facts which has so often been the centre of our teaching process. It means, rather, that the teacher must live with those whom he is to teach, and place at their disposal his wider experience in approaching the problems of Christian living.

“3. *It is clear that the curriculum of Christian education must be concerned with the CHRISTIAN interpretation of life experience.* The work of the day school and the work of the Sunday school must be clearly differentiated at this point. The time which the Sunday school has at its disposal is so brief that it must make the centre of its work that of interpreting the meaning of experience in terms of the life and teachings of Jesus.”

### *The Process of Curriculum Construction*

“It must be clear by this time that curriculum in the sense in which the word is used here means more than a body of printed materials which may be secured from a publishing agency. A curriculum of life experience must be built where life is being lived. In other words, the best curriculum is a *home-made* curriculum. The pastor and other leaders who must take responsibility for Christian education in the local church are the chief curriculum makers for rural children. Let no one sup-



pose that this means that the denominational curriculum committee and publishing house are to relinquish their work. We shall discuss later the question of the kind of materials which a church has a right to expect from its curriculum-making agency."

### *How to Develop a Curriculum*

"The development of a curriculum for a rural church, and for that matter for any church, includes at least the following steps:

"1. *The selection of objectives.* It is true that most church workers have a vague idea of the purpose of their work, but if any group of church school teachers were asked what their aims are the result would probably be somewhat disappointing. The more definitely the objectives can be stated the more likely it is that definite results will be achieved.

"The International Council of Religious Education, representing the coöperative work of more than forty denominations, has recently completed an effort to state general objectives of religious education. I would suggest that these objectives be used as a starting point in any local church. It may be that they will be accepted in their entirety, or they may be modified. The main point is that every group of workers should adopt its own objectives in the full knowledge and understanding of their meaning.

"The formulation of objectives by the International Council was made in terms of seven major statements. Shorn for the sake of brevity of all their specific interpretations, these statements read as follows:

I. To foster in growing persons a consciousness of God

- as a reality in human experience, and a sense of personal relationship to Him.
- II. To lead growing persons into an understanding and appreciation of the personality, life and teaching of Jesus Christ.
  - III. To foster in growing persons a progressive and continuous development of Christlike character.
  - IV. To develop in growing persons the ability and disposition to participate in and contribute constructively to the building of a social order embodying the ideal of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.
  - V. To lead growing persons to build a life philosophy on the basis of a Christian interpretation of life and the universe.
  - VI. To develop in growing persons the ability and disposition to participate in the organized society of Christians—the church.
  - VII. To effect in growing persons the assimilation of the best religious experience of the race, as effective guidance to present experience.

*“2. Discovering the actual experience of the boys and girls for whom the curriculum is being built, on which it must be based, and in the light of which its result must be achieved. At this point the rural church has a tremendous advantage over the city church. Usually the people living in a given rural community know each other quite well, which is not the case in the city community. Teachers will know the experiences of their pupils, or they can discover their experiences with comparatively little investigation. Sometimes an attempt to study such experience will result in surprising*

discoveries. The point is that such a study can be made very much more simply in the rural church than it can in the larger and more scattered city congregation.

“The effort to understand the experience of the pupil constituency will include such things as the study of child psychology, observation of children, visitation in the homes of pupils, recreational activities in which teachers may share with pupils, etc. The staff of workers of a given church could not do better than to spend a number of meetings discussing just this question, what is the experience of the pupils whom we are trying to lead, and what implications does it have for Christian teaching?

“This is not essentially different from the approach which has usually been made by competent church school teachers. While conceiving their task in terms of teaching Bible knowledge, they have yet never lost sight of the fact that such knowledge must be related to experience if it is to be useful. The application of the lesson has formed a part of most good teaching. The experience-centered curriculum would seek to carry this principle to the point where the need of the pupil is the first consideration in the selection of subject matter.

“3. *A program of activities.* Having determined the objectives toward which the church school will strive, and having come to a fairly clear grasp of the experience of the pupils who are to be taught, the next question which must be faced is that of ways and means of achieving the desired results. At this point we must be practical. Granted that a certain result is to be achieved, what are the influences which can be brought to bear on the pupil in order to bring them to pass?

"The answer which we have made in the past is that of teaching the Bible. Only the Sunday school lesson has been regarded as the centre of activity. To this has been added in some instances a program of genuine worship and certain through-the-week activities, but these activities have been decidedly subsidiary to Bible teaching. We would now say that whatever is most likely to produce the change of life in the pupil which is desired, is the curriculum activity of most importance. This will require some reorganization of the program of our church. Whatever has been done can no longer be done simply because it is traditional, but it must meet the test of actual results. I do not doubt that the teaching of the Bible will continue to form a large part of the activity of the church school, but it may be a different kind of teaching from that we have had in the past.

"If we may think for a moment of the entire constituency of the rural church as being the constituency of its church school, we will begin to see what is meant by the term 'the church as a school.' I think we would grant that objectives such as stated above are the goal of all church work. We would grant further that the greatest achievement of the church is to be measured by the transformed lives of persons. If this be the case, then our chief question is: What shall this church do to change life in the direction of Christian purpose and experience?" Truth is eternal but the methods of teaching it change.

"From this point of view every activity which the church undertakes must meet the test of its value for Christian growth. This applies to the recreational program, the financial methods, and the sermon as well

as to the program of worship in the church school and the teaching of the Bible.

"4. *Organizing the school.* Having determined the type of activity which shall be undertaken, it becomes comparatively easy to organize the school constituency into the kind of group through which this can best be accomplished. This will involve certain larger group meetings for inspiration and fellowship. It will involve smaller group meetings for study and discussion. It will involve providing opportunities to enable the more mature and the less mature to mingle together for the sake of the influence of each upon the other.

"Rural churches, because many of them are small, have sometimes had the impression that they cannot have good church schools. Perhaps this impression is justified in the light of some of the ideals of church organization which have been spread abroad. It is true, further, that the church which is limited in its building and equipment will be handicapped in organizing a school in the most effective way, and often we think of the rural church as being handicapped in this respect. It should be said on the other hand, however, that there are certain elements of strength in the rural situation. I have observed that children in rural Sunday schools usually take a greater interest in their work. They seem to have more of a purpose in the thing which they do. The response to a given program and the result from it is likely to be greater in the rural church. After all, the test of success is not the perfection with which a program is worked out, but the influence which it has on those for whom it is planned.

"5. *The selection of materials.* We have indicated that while the responsibility for planning a program



must rest largely with the workers in the local church, these workers cannot be expected to carry on without guidance. This involves the selection of lesson materials and program guides. The statement has often been made that in the preparation of lesson materials the rural church has been neglected. Illustrations in these lessons have been drawn from city life. Writers have had in mind city rather than rural situations. If this be true, it is a condition which ought to be remedied. An experience curriculum cannot be built up from experience that is foreign to that of the rural church constituency. It must be admitted that great numbers of rural churches have used uniform lessons because they have not found the newer curriculum materials satisfactory for their purposes. Either the materials have been too difficult for the rural teachers to handle, or they have been prepared from such a viewpoint as to make them unusable. The workers have not been able to make the necessary adaptations. This situation will be remedied from two directions:

“a. The rapid development of the Group Graded Lessons has in it a large element of hope. The Group Graded Lessons are sufficiently closely graded for educational purposes when used in the smaller school. They are largely Biblical, and as I have indicated above, church school teaching must continue to be Biblical. They are, however, increasingly based on pupil experience and provide such guidance as will enable teachers more and more to utilize the present experience of the pupils whom they are teaching. They are simple and yet comprehensive enough to enable the resourceful teacher to develop them most fruitfully for the situation in which he happens to be working. Best of all, they

are inexpensive, and this constitutes an important item for many rural churches.

“b. The principle of an experience-centered curriculum requires that provision be made for the needs of the pupil wherever he may live. The fact that not much of the newer type of material has been prepared for rural situations is to be charged to the fact that the approach is so new. As this type of curriculum becomes more general, and as more and more workers experiment with it in rural churches, it will unquestionably result in newer and better guidance materials for the rural church which is able to develop a more comprehensive curriculum than is possible with the Group Graded Lessons.

### *Conditions of Success*

“All of this may impress you as being impossible in most rural churches. Let me remind you that I suggested at the beginning that the detailed application must be made by every worker in his own particular situation. I believe that the principle of an experience-centered curriculum is sound. Not only that, but I believe that only so long as we approach this principle with any type of curriculum will we have any measure of success. If we could once get this idea firmly implanted in the minds of those who are guiding religious education in the rural church, I am certain that great improvements would be made.

“Three important conditions are essential to success with this type of curriculum:

“1. The first of these is a pastor who is able to guide and supervise the work in Christian education. The church has a right to expect guidance from the pastor

in all aspects of its work. Christian education is becoming such an important aspect of the church's work that the pastor can no longer ignore it. If we will make the criterion of the church's success its influence on the Christian purpose and experience of persons, the pastor may well place Christian education among the most important of his duties. In many churches he will be the only person who is competent to organize and supervise an effective program.

"2. The second is interested and trained lay leadership. This is so obvious that it need hardly be discussed. Most churches are suffering from a dearth of leadership, yet we are constrained to believe that in every community there are those who are competent to lead the people of that community in an effective program of religious education provided they can be given the inspiration which will carry them through the process of learning. Again we must emphasize that the pastor is the most important person in bringing this to pass.

"3. The third condition is homes which are sensitive to Christian values, and willing to place the Christian nurture of children in a place of major importance. The church will not achieve a large measure of success in Christian education unless it has the support of the home. It is in the home that the life-experience of children is chiefly taking place. Building the home as a school in Christian living may well constitute one of the church's major tasks."

### *Practical Observations*

Dr. Vieth has left little to say about curriculum, but before closing the chapter there are a few practical observations we would like to make. The curriculum

should not be static. It should be continually improving. In no progressive school is the curriculum the same as it was twenty years ago. What is true of secular education is to some extent true in fields of religious education. But the sphere of religious education is spiritual, and the task of formulating the curriculum is more difficult. The curriculum which will be formulated by a religious educator or group will depend to a great extent upon the conception of God, of man, of sin, of salvation. While the great truths to be taught are eternal and unchangeable, the methods of teaching them may be improved. The laws of education require that curriculum material be different for people of different ages. The grade school, high school, college and university each has a curriculum suited to the age to be taught. The application of the educational laws to religious education accounts for our graded curriculum. The laws of education also require that the curriculum be suited to the needs of the different occupational groups. This is true even when the occupations are very closely allied, as illustrated by the differentiation of curricula used for the training of the rural school teacher and the city teacher. The teachers in our public schools and the farm and home demonstration agents are required not only to have a liberal college or university education, but they must have specialized training to fit them for the task of dealing with rural conditions and for becoming helpful and acceptable leaders of the inhabitants of the countryside.

It would be impractical to prepare one kind of religious educational literature for the country people and another kind for the city people. It would be too expensive. The criticism has been made that most of the

materials now prepared are by city people who work in city churches with urban conditions in mind. The answer to this criticism is that the rural church workers should adjust the materials to suit their own needs. The reply to this is that the workers in the country churches do not have the training which would enable them to make the adjustment but that literature prepared with country conditions in mind and suitable for country churches could be much more easily adjusted to city conditions, partly because the city churches have a larger number of trained workers and can frequently afford paid specialists.

A compromise might be effected having a just proportion of those who prepare the literature, religious educational experts who live in the country, deal with country conditions and write from the point of view of the rural work. The difficulty is that so few of those who are working in country churches have trained themselves definitely for their task, and it would be difficult to discover capable writers in rural areas. The remedy, therefore, would be for more gifted people to choose the rural work and make specialized preparation for it.

While it is impractical to have special literature for the country church schools, it is different in the curriculum for the training of leaders. There should be special units for rural parents, young people, ministers and lay workers. There should be at least two units in the curriculum for leadership training, designed to prepare for leadership among the country people.

The Cokesbury studies prepared by the Southern Methodist Church constitute a praiseworthy effort to provide curriculum material for the training of rural



leadership. These courses are built largely with the country church in mind, although not exclusively rural.

The Presbyterian Church, U. S., has an elective known as "The Town and Country Church Unit in the Standard Leadership Training Curriculum." This is based upon a reading course, carefully selected, which deals with country life conditions. It is especially adapted to correspondence. When roads are bad or the families live at a great distance from the church, this work can be done in the home. Ten books have been carefully selected, which constitute a circulating library. It would be difficult to get country people to make a study of a technical text-book. The books which have been chosen are what we would term easy reading. The following is the list of books selected for the Country Life Circulating Library:

The Story of John Frederic Oberlin

Steeple Among the Hills

The New Call

Christ and the Country People

The Country Church and Public Affairs

Building the Country Sunday School

What is Right with the Country Church

The Country Church As It Is

Adventures in Contentment

A New Day for the Country Church

The list of books is subject to revision.

The following is a series of examination questions:

1. Name and discuss four of the most serious problems of the average country Sunday school, and tell how you think they can best be solved.
2. After reading the program material for young people's work in your denomination, construct in your

own way a program for the young people in a country church.

3. Discuss what you think are the best methods to enlist and train leadership in a country congregation.
4. Name and discuss some of the characteristics of country people which the Christian worker should understand in order to do his best work among them.
5. Tell why and how a survey should be made in a rural community.
6. Construct in your own way a program for a country church, and tell how you think the program of worship, preaching, teaching and social service can best be promoted.
7. Tell how you think the country church should co-operate with the public school, the agricultural extension service, and other agencies at work among rural people.
8. Tell how you think the people of a country congregation can best learn God's laws of production, enter into coöperation with God in their work, and develop in stewardship.
9. Tell how you think a country congregation may best plan and promote an all-year program of evangelism.
10. Tell how many pages you have read in the Country Life Circulating Library.

A different set of questions may be prepared from time to time.

Until a better book is prepared this volume might be used as a basis of study for a unit in the Standard Leadership Training Curriculum. Only by reading ex-

tensively and making a special study of rural church work, testing out the suggestions by trial and error method, can our country church workers prepare themselves to produce the literature suitable for rural church needs.

### *Curriculum for Ministers*

The rural minister must necessarily become the educator of the religious educators in his parish. Not many country churches can afford trained, paid leaders in religious education. If a pastor is to adopt in his teaching the curriculum suggested by Dr. Vieth, he himself should be taught by the same methods.

How does the curriculum of the average theological seminary conform to the definition which Dr. Vieth gives to us? If you will refer to an earlier part of this chapter you will note that he says: "What is generally thought of in present day educational science as the meaning of curriculum, is (1) experience under guidance; (2) the experience of the pupil consciously selected or initiated and definitely enriched and guided with a view to achieving certain objectives." The curricula of public teacher training schools is just this. A great deal of the education of public school teachers is "experience under guidance," and in a number of states no one can be a principal of a high school unless he has had three years experience under someone else. Yet we send our graduates of theological seminaries out without any "experience under guidance" to take charge of churches. Especially is this true in rural areas.

I have a son who is a student in a medical college. I find that a large part of his education is "experience under guidance"—under guidance of men who are not

professional professors, but practicing physicians. After he graduates he will be required to take one or two years as an interne. This is additional "experience under guidance."

Would there not be less restlessness in the ministry and less dissatisfaction on the part of churches with their pastors, if ministers were educated as school teachers and doctors are trained. If it is unwise to send out men who are to deal with the minds or bodies of men without ample "experience under guidance," is it not folly to send forth men whose business is the "cure of souls," who have had no "experience under guidance?"

Every theological seminary should have at least one professor who is capable of teaching and supervising the religious work in rural areas. He might be called the professor of Town and Country Church Work.

The theological seminaries of all denominations are located in the urban centres. Their faculties are selected from city pastors whose only intimate contacts as a rule with country conditions were during their childhood. A great majority of the ministers must necessarily spend their lives in the rural areas. There are more rural ministers in the Southern States alone than there are city ministers in the whole United States. If we are to have a practical ministry, prepared for constructive leadership among the rural people, there should be a revision of curricula in our theological seminaries which would provide for specialized training to prepare the future ministry for leadership among the country people.

Some men in spite of the lack of proper training, because of special gifts, will succeed. These are the ministers who are usually called to city churches after

they have proved their ability to succeed in some rural community. The man who fails because of the lack of proper training stays on, probably both he and his congregation restless and unhappy.

The vacation work in home mission and country churches should be directed by the head of this Rural Department. A detailed report of vacation work should be required and the experiences of the students, including their successes and their failures, should be discussed with this professor. This study should be required of all students in the theological seminaries, for those who in the Providence of God will spend their lives as city pastors, will be able to do their work very much more efficiently if they have a knowledge and sympathetic understanding of conditions in the rural and home mission fields. The Conference of Theological Seminaries of the United States and Canada clearly recognizes the condition and is attempting to change it. Some institutions already have supervised practical work.

The Larger Parish or County Unit Plan where one minister of experience and gifts of leadership becomes pastor of a large area with two or more assistants, will help to afford the specialized training in rural work, which may be done in coöperation with the chair on Town and Country Church Work.

There are many courses which might profitably be taught either in theological seminaries or in short-term rural pastors' schools. We name only a few of them: "The Bible as a Rural Book"; "Rural Sociology"; "Rural Economics"; "Rural Leadership Training"; "Religious Education in the Rural Church"; "Rural Church Conditions and Methods"; "Rural Church Sit-



uations and Their Solution"; "Rural and Village Church Problems"; "The Satellite Community Church From Both the City and Rural Viewpoint," etc.

No group of ministers to-day have more difficult problems or more serious responsibilities than those who labour among the country people, and these should have a specialized training for their task through "experience under guidance." This type of training might be carried on with pastors through a period of years as post-graduate work. The rural fields may become laboratories or clinics in which the programs of work may be initiated and developed under the guidance of the instructor. Ministers trained in this way, using the same methods, will be able to train the leaders in their parishes. This is the way in which ministers were trained before we had theological seminaries. These were the methods which Jesus used in training His disciples to become ministers in the New Testament Church.

## V

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ADAPTED TO RURAL NEEDS

THE Methodist Church has given more attention to specialized training for the rural ministry than has any other denomination. Dr. Albert Z. Mann, head of the Department of Sociology and Home Missions, Garrett Biblical Institute, has been one of the outstanding leaders in this movement, and has given a lifetime of study to a curriculum of religious education intended to meet the needs of rural people. He has specialized in the training of ministers for rural work.

Dr. Mann, speaking at the Institute of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, says that he is constructively optimistic regarding the outlook for the adjustment of the curriculum to meet modern rural needs. He recognizes that much is now being done by certain leaders to pave the way for the wholesome discussion of this subject. The fact that a place has been given on the program of the Institute of Public Affairs, he considers indicative of the general interest and compelling need for such discussion.

#### *Basic Questions and Issues Involved*

Dr. Mann proceeds as follows:

“Are rural people different from urban people? If so, how are they different and what makes them different?”

Do rural people of different sections differ from each other? Do the problems of country churches vary in different sections, and among different racial and territorial groups? The manner in which you answer these questions will determine your insistence in favour of, or against a specialized curriculum of religious education for the rural church and the type of instruction proposed for rural childhood and youth.

“Do rural churches serve the same purposes as urban churches? Do they serve the people differently and can the same methods and materials be used? What is there inherent in rural life that demands special attention in constructing a rural curriculum? Must the rural institutions and enterprises always remain small in their operating units? Can rural people hope for, or do they desire the same elaborate equipment or programs developed for large city churches? As these issues are settled, the basis of a rural curriculum is established.

“Are not certain sections of America producing many more children than can be assimilated in local agriculture? Must not much of this childhood be nourished, protected, clothed, educated and directed into worthwhile pursuits of life under rural conditions and then sent to the towns and cities? Shall such children be given religious instruction with this in view? Is the curriculum of religious education of the country church to be adapted to those who stay in the country or to those who go to the city? Is not much of the leadership and membership in many large city churches made up of the people trained in country churches? Can the same curriculum and teaching supply the needs of both those who go and those who stay? How can the rural communities maintain their strength and stamina if leader-

ship and resources are continually drained away? This problem must be faced. The policy adopted will affect the proposed curriculum changes.

“Must the rural people always be housed in inartistic and inadequate buildings, serving a few people, often too small to organize effectively for purposes of adequate religious instruction? Shall standards and programs established for larger urban churches, and mostly by people out of touch with the usual facilities of rural religion, be continually forced upon rural people who must either choose or refuse what is offered? How should rural churches differ from urban churches in suggestion and equipment in order to house and serve the devotional, educational and social needs of rural people, and conceive the resources of rural life as a basis for vital religious teaching and living? As these issues are settled, the basis of the curriculum will be established.

“Teachers and administrators in the church are said to be ‘untrained’ and ‘small horizoned.’ Other less complimentary terms could be quoted. Nothing is truer than that ‘a poor teacher spoils a good lesson.’ (Both lesson and teacher may be spoiled by a poor place to teach, to say nothing of the boys and girls who are a part of the spoiling process.) ‘Does a teacher of religion need less training than a teacher of arithmetic?’ How can modern methods of leadership training now so common to large urban churches, be adjusted to meet rural needs? A few ventures are being made in this direction, but they are altogether inadequate in most sections of America. The finest curriculum in the hands of poor teachers cannot produce satisfactory results, even though it be religious in content. Better training is basic to a better curriculum.

“ These and many other issues could be raised, any and all of which will affect the decision in favour of, or opposed to the establishment of a specialized curriculum for the rural church.

### *A Constructive Curriculum*

“ This is a relative factor as compared with other rural, social needs. Please note we have added the term ‘ constructive.’ The rural church usually has a limited, ‘ old-fashioned ’ curriculum as it has other meagre but sturdy assets, which are mostly inadequate as measured by present day demands on rural life and as compared with the more effective curricula of the public schools and the projects of the agricultural extension movement.

“ Any curriculum developed to meet the needs of rural people must be created or reconstructed in relationship with the progress made in the solution of all of the current accompanying problems. A most excellent curriculum cannot be made to produce effectively if linked with poor equipment, untrained teachers, ignorance of the child and his world, and a lack of understanding on the part of the community as to the modern aims and purposes of the church and religion.

“ In other words, a curriculum to be really effective, must be adapted to, interpreted by, and consistent with the life and ideals of the people whose children are involved. Otherwise, the finest curriculum that could be conceived of, would fail to bring the desired results in producing a basis for ‘ the good life.’

“ This principle is easily illustrated by such simple teachings as Sabbath observance, The lesson taught in the Sunday school is of little effect on child life unless work stops on Sunday, or to state it positively, the fact



that the process of agricultural work of the farm stops on Sunday probably makes a greater impression on the attitude of the child than the Sunday school lesson as taught on the Sabbath in the church. If the two go hand in hand and the curriculum is consistent with the practice, it is most effective.

“This principle may be illustrated further by the teaching of ‘Christian Unity.’ This lesson may appear in the curriculum, but if there is lack of unity in family life, strife in church organization, or if bitter sectarianism divides the community, the lesson on Christian Unity in the curriculum will have little significance for the child.” To teach truth effectively it must be lived by the teacher.

“To be more explicit, any curriculum to be effective, must be reasonably consistent as compared with the other phases of organized life in the local community. Of course, the ideal should always precede the real, but not too far. It is at this point that the rural church has suffered most. There is great need for change in the traditional, literally interpreted curriculum of the conservative rural group. Reforms can only become really effective in this field as the whole tenor of rural religious life is challenged with the needs of the new day.

### *Confusion as to the Central Emphasis*

“This question is raised because it is fundamental. Again, certain premises are essential as a basis for decision. If one premise is accepted, ‘the old International lessons’ will be selected. If another premise is accepted, the Group Graded or Closely Graded Lessons will be the logical conclusion. To state it simply, shall the curriculum of the rural church be:

1. Book Centered?
2. Child Centered?
3. Church Centered?
4. Christ Centered?
5. Life Centered?

“Certainly it may be more than one of these. It may be all of them, or these various phases may be emphasized as circumstances may demand in the life of the child or during the growth and development of the adolescent.”

*Is a Specialized Curriculum Demanded?*

“Some research is now being undertaken to discover the demands for specialized curricula for religious education in terms of city and country life. The experience of public education at present would seem to favour specialization in certain lines and generalization in others. It must be evident to all that certain emphases of religion and character education are common to all phases of life, whether city, town or country, and should be *stressed alike* under all circumstances. It is also observed that there is a great leveling process now under way and the distinctive characteristics of both country and city are now more widely known and commonly appreciated by all. The earlier rural neighbourhood consciousness is being enlarged and consolidated into community consciousness. The farm population has been decreasing and the cities rapidly gaining in ascendancy of numbers and influence, but more city people are turning to the country to find wholesome expression for their children.

“After several years of careful investigation in various parts of the country, observation leads us to the follow-

ing general conclusions regarding the demands for specialized curriculum for rural religious education:

“1. What is needed is not so much a completely specialized program for rural religious education, as an adjustment or an adaptation of the new life-centered curriculum re-interpreted and reorganized in terms and values of rural life.

“2. There is a grave need for a simplified system of courses and activities adapted to the needs of the small group, housed in a modest rural church building. It must be so simplified that choice of courses and richness of content are made available and adaptable to the smallest group for purposes of religious instruction.

“3. The demand is for the adaptation of the curriculum, now dominated by the experiences of city life and city churches, so that commensurate values may be expressed in terms of rural life and rural living. The trend of the rural public school in constructing a curriculum to meet rural needs serves as an excellent guide in this new venture.

“4. There is a great demand by the better rural churches for practical helps for rural leaders which will offer them assistance in the selection from the more closely graded systems, those courses best adapted to rural teachers and rural children and carrying sequences which will provide the small school with simplified courses of study which in character and content are adapted to rural needs.

“5. The curriculum of the future should be based upon the ideal of the mutual needs of country and city. Such interdependence should be frankly realized and the advantages of each extreme be made available for the other. The curriculum of religious education can do

much in teaching the mutual interests common to both urban and rural life.

"6. As stated in the introduction, 'much of the kind of material needed does not exist in usable form, and will have to be produced.' An earnest effort must be made by all concerned to produce and adapt this material and make it available for early release in the field of religious education. This demands willingness to venture and experiment, which has not been a characteristic of the traditional rural church."

Dr. Mann states, and makes out a good case by proofs, that in the past no special demand for a rural curriculum has been recognized on the part of the professional groups, particularly by the leaders of the special groups such as the religious education movement, the church boards and the publication interests. As this part of his discussion is not necessary to prove that there is a need and demand for a curriculum adapted to rural needs, it is omitted.

He feels that a rural curriculum is needed but that a demand for it is not likely to come from the professional movement of religious education. He maintains that this is not due to any apparent opposition on the part of the leaders in this movement, but rather to the fact that the religious education movement is almost entirely motivated by the leadership in the larger churches located in urban situations or by a leadership professionally trained in this environment.

#### *Demand from Rural Church Movement*

Dr. Mann proceeds with his discussion as follows:

"The demand for a specialized curriculum arises from the rural church movement and public education.

“1. Early experiences in the training of rural leadership have been confined largely to the rural church movement, which was particularly noticeable from 1910 to 1925, and during which time much pioneering was done by such outstanding leaders as Warren H. Wilson, Paul L. Vogt, Malcolm Dana, and others, all of whom held responsible positions in their respective communions representing the interests of the rural church. At one time, the writer was associated with a group of about forty-five men, supported in part by the funds made available through the Rural Department of the Board of Home Missions and Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For several years, these rural leaders, as they were called, met in conference twice a year for the development of standards and policies of rural leadership training in the colleges and seminaries where they were teaching, and in connection with the extension work among rural churches conducted under their auspices. This organization was known as ‘The National Rural Leadership Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church,’ and during the years of its active promotion, much pioneering in the field of rural religious education was undertaken. During these pioneering stages of this movement, considerable attention was given to the needs of specialized curricula for religious education. Several constructive experiments were conducted which resulted in the better training of leaders for the country churches of this communion. Attention was also given by these rural leaders to the promotion of summer schools for ministers and at one time, as many as 450 ministers per year were exposed to courses on the problems of rural leadership and the needs in rural religious education.

“Other communions made similar ventures in the



line of rural leadership training with particular emphasis upon education of the ministry in rural church methods. The call for an adjusted or a specialized curriculum of religious education to meet the needs of the town and country church has been largely initiated in this group.

"2. It is now generally recognized that the emphasis on rural work is largely confined to the boards of home missions of the various communions. Almost all of the leading communions have provided for departments of rural church work, and it is from practical experimentation and from the recognized demands of outstanding rural leaders that the call for more adequate assistance is arising.

"3. The demand for an adapted rural curriculum is also noted in various local churches, both denominational and interdenominational. This is particularly observed among the ministers who are most awake to their tasks and who demand new instruments and equipment in their effort to meet modern rural needs. The general criticism is registered from almost all such sources that the present elaborate curricula does not adapt itself to the rural church and that there must be some adjustment if successful religious education is to be realized in rural communities.

"It is repeatedly pointed out by these ministers that the trend is away from and not toward the desired adjustment of the rural situations and that the 'cues' are continually being taken from the large city churches instead of from the needs of the many small town and country churches, which are struggling along without adequate assistance to promote effective systems of religious instruction for their constituencies.

"4. A demand for a specialized curriculum for the

rural church is also reflected from the experience of the public schools. Anyone who studies the movement of public education of the town and country areas will readily notice the radical adjustment which has characterized rural education during the past twenty years. That the public school systems have adjusted themselves to these conditions is evidenced by the addition of agriculture to the curriculum and by the development of text-books which deal with the terminology, the problems and the situations common to rural life. The curriculum has also been adapted to small scale buildings and simplified equipment.

“In order to see this demand as reflected by the public schools, one needs only to read the earlier books written by Vogt, Cubberly, Brim and other pioneers in the field of rural education. It is very evident that the demand for an adjustment of the curriculum of public schools to the needs of country people arose some twenty years ago and that the adjustment has been achieved, so that the curriculum of the public schools is now quite generally adapted to the needs of the rural people and is no longer based upon the standards set by large scale city educational systems.

“Observation leads us to believe that the church is facing the same problem that the schools faced twenty years ago and that the curriculum of religious education as used in town and country churches is due to undergo a similar change as evidenced in that of the public schools. The change may not be as revolutionary nor as radical, but, nevertheless, it must be recognized.

“5. Anyone who attends such conferences as the American Country Life Association, The American Federation of Farm Bureaus, The Master Farmers' Move-

ment and the country life conferences and short courses held in connection with the state agricultural colleges, cannot but observe that the thinking people living in the country are now demanding better things for the religious education of their children.

"The demand is expressed not only in terms of religious educational values, but also in the form of more adequate character education. As the old-fashioned controls of rural life continue to break down under modern conditions, this demand will be more insistently expressed and articulated by farm leaders and the adoption of an up-to-date curriculum in religious education will be the inevitable result."

### *Retarding Conditions*

"Only a few obvious situations need to be stated to show that improvements in the interest of rural religious life have been retarded during the past several years by adverse economic and social conditions. A few of the conditions retarding the new developments in an adequate program of religious education, as well as in many other phases of rural life, may be stated as follows:

"1. The rapid growth of cities and suburban areas and the resulting proportionate decrease in the total and percentage of rural population.

"2. General changes in the organization of rural life in which other agencies have made adjustments to meet modern needs while the churches have lagged behind.

"3. The agricultural depression, which has prevented prosperity among country people and adequate support of rural institutions including the town and country churches.

" 4. The decline in number and membership of rural churches as a result of the above mentioned conditions.

" 5. Inadequate equipment of rural church buildings, erected to meet the needs of previous generations but inadequate for the demands of the present day.

" 6. An untrained, short-termed ministry, with no vision of a long time program for the rural church.

" 7. Inadequate financial support due to the diminishing population, the economic depression, and the deflation of land and crop values in rural areas.

" 8. A conservative constituency suffering from a 'psychology of defeat,' due to the general decreases and depressions.

" 9. The resultant 'let down' in development of constructive missionary programs by the missionary agencies of the various communions due to diminished funds and leadership.

" 10. The apparent failure of the overhead 'ecclesiastical' forces to see the demand for adjustment to present conditions and to make new ventures in the reorganization and re-parishing of rural churches.

" These and many other situations faced by the rural people have indirectly retarded the progress in the reconstruction of the curriculum. Add to these influences the fact that the leadership in the religious education movement is taken almost entirely by the city churches, and one can readily understand why the more adequate provision for rural religious education has not been realized."

### *A Brief for the Rural Church*

" May we hesitate here to explain that the writer has no feeling of criticism or complaint against the urban

movement of religious education. He has nothing but highest praise for the urban leadership which has developed such an effective curriculum and program for the large scale school. On the other hand, he has a brief for the rural church and will endeavour to state it in no uncertain terms.

“The present conditions which America faces do not in any sense mitigate the demand for the same high standards among the 125,000 small scale rural churches as are recognized for large scale urban churches, which at the present time are increasing mainly by means of the transferred membership and leadership from the smaller churches in town and country areas. We continually revert to the insistent conviction that these same rural churches should not be penalized because of circumstances for which they are not responsible and which have prevented them from making similar progress along with many of the larger and more fortunate city churches.

“As referred to above, perhaps the most encouraging feature with respect to the demand for an adjusted or specialized rural curriculum in religious education, is reflected from the experience of the public schools and the success achieved in adapting the public school curriculum to the demands of modern rural people. When the rural church is awakened to the present situation as the public schools were awakened to the demands of the rural people a generation ago, the town and country churches will go forward with comparative yet unmistakable progress.

“Perhaps more time must be taken to work out the general basis for adapting the curricula to the town and country needs than was anticipated by the earlier



pioneers in this movement. The fact that many experiments are now in progress and that successful sporadic ventures are quite generally recorded, is very encouraging to those who recognize the need for adjustments in the field of rural religious education."

### *Encouraging Tendencies*

"Along with the sinister tendencies and the problems with which the rural churches are faced, there are also a number of encouraging tendencies, which should be given equal or even more emphatic consideration. May we venture to suggest some of these hopeful situations?

"1. The rural church is unusually fortunate in the fact that several systems of graded lessons have been developed for the large city church. Much of this discussion has already been covered, so it is not necessary to retrace at this point. The elaborate curricula intended for the large church may, with comparative ease, be adapted or adjusted to meet the simpler situations in the small rural churches as was done by public education in favour of rural schools a decade or two ago.

"2. The methods of adaptation of the public schools are available for use in religious education and the experiences can be readily transferred to the problems which are facing the rural church.

"3. The leaders in religious education are, in many instances, turning away from the past efforts at the mass production of character and are proposing the small group with consecrated personal attention as the most successful method of religious instruction. The rural church furnishes this kind of a setting and has other advantages not obtained in the urban community.

"4. The demand is not for elaborate changes in the

present curriculum status but rather for more simplified adjustments of the elaborate curriculum to the following situations which are common to rural life:

- (a) Small groups of children and youth.
- (b) Inadequate but revered buildings and equipment.
- (c) Modest leaders and simple administration.
- (d) Conservative backgrounds of faith and doctrine.
- (e) A poorly trained but tremendously concerned ministry anxious for advancement in religious education.
- (f) A traditional stability of family life and deep-seated convictions as to the inherent value of religion.

“While these factors may not all seem encouraging, there is a measure of hope in the fact that the attention of rural people is being focused on their needs and that there is a present demand for better things in the field of religion and character education.

“Another encouraging factor which should be mentioned in this instance is the attention that is now being given to the education of a more effective ministry. Under the present rural conditions the ministry must lead in this movement for the development of a constructive program in rural religious education. Increased attention is now being given to this demand in college and seminary courses and in summer schools of methods conducted by the various communions.

“The fact that the present economic situation has exploded the earlier theory prevalent in religious education, that professional leadership must be provided to meet the emergency, opens the way to a reëmphasis upon the minister as the logical and responsible leader in rural religious education.

“Under the present circumstances, the ministry must lead in the development of a constructive curriculum for religious education, and it is encouraging to note in the present crisis that more and more ministers are recognizing this fact and are giving additional time and attention to the program of religious instruction in the local church.”

### *The Adjusted Curriculum*

“As a general conclusion, which may be reasonably deduced from the observations presented above, the demand is not for a revolution by any radical means, but rather for a constructive and intelligent recognition of rural needs and a reasonable adjustment of the curriculum to meet these needs, which are obvious when the present trends and characteristics of rural life are analyzed.

“Certain steps apparent in this process may be pointed out for guidance and experimentation:

“1. The rural church and ministry should take all that the professional religious education movement has to offer and make an honest effort to adapt it to rural situations.

“The rural church is greatly indebted for the more elaborate programs of large city churches and for the effective methods and curricula for religious instruction which have been achieved. Rather than assume a critical or covetous attitude, leaders in the rural church area should assume a generous attitude, giving credit to the city churches for the fine progress they have made. At the same time, rural leaders should set about, with all the available means at their disposal, to adjust and adapt the more elaborate systems to the simpler

needs in the small scale rural churches. Encouragement by denominational leaders, with modest appropriations of funds for experimentation, will bring marked results in this great task.

"2. The willingness to experiment and the encouragement of rural ministers and churches to take new ventures is an essential to progress. In some instances rural ministers are penalized or criticized by the overhead leadership for their willingness to venture into new fields of religious adjustment and teaching.

"Such adventures are taken by larger churches, by interdenominational groups and by various extension agencies in other fields. Why should not the rural ministry be encouraged to go forward with similar adventures? Such initiative and pioneering is essential to progress in this new adjustment.

"3. The demand for helps from the 'professional religious education movement' and from the publication interests should be recognized and careful study and support should be given to those who desire such assistance.

"4. The process of selection from the more elaborate, closely graded curriculum should be simplified and attention called to certain courses which would be adaptable to local rural needs and which could be selected in cycles for the limited age groups in the small scale school.

"5. More attention should be given to the training of rural leaders in religious education, and the reëquipment of country churches to meet the modern needs of rural people. The agricultural extension system recognized such needs and suggests the necessary changes in organization and equipment to meet modern developments. If, in a similar way, the professional movement of religious

education and the boards of education of the various communions would recognize the needs of the rural ministry and rural churches, and be willing to experiment with them, it is believed that great progress could be made in the solution of this problem during the next few years."

### *Rural Church Curriculum*

"In the general situation which Christianity faces in America to-day, an attitude of self-respect must be recognized as it applies alike to city and country church. The inherent values of rural life and the advantages of the country church have been overlooked or neglected. The country church HAS something to contribute to the city church and to the whole church. Doubtless certain contributions which the town and country church can make are as essential in the success of the whole program of religious education as the contributions which are now being made by city churches.

"It will be sufficient here merely to call attention to some of the contributions which rural life and the small-scale town and country church can make to the whole movement of religious education.

"1. The genius of small groups and the simplicity of approach to personal problems have been characteristic of the rural people throughout American history. The adjustment of the religious education program and curriculum can creditably begin at this point.

"2. Elaborate equipment is not necessary in the process of character building and the effective teaching of religion. The modern exhortation to 'plan simple things,' is very effective as applied to the town and country church methods in the teaching of religion.



"3. The natural setting of rural life is of inherent value in religious teaching. The inspirational aspects of physical growth and life processes, the grandeur of rural landscapes and the dependence upon natural forces and the 'acts of God,' are all conducive to wholesome religious and ethical attitudes and conduct. The rural mind naturally responds to the mystery of religion which is a decided asset in religious education.

"4. The stability, dependability and independence of rural people and rural institutions, particularly the family, is a worthy asset in the field of religious instruction. As George Walter Fiske says, 'Religion needs a new home base.' The rural church and community is now best fitted to contribute this 'new home base' in religion.

"5. The experience of the rural public school in developing new curricula to meet rural needs is available for the church. As there are almost as many small-scale churches as there are small-scale rural schools, the church can build its program upon the rural public school experience, and justify the change accordingly.

"6. The Bible is a rural book and best adapted to rural interpretations. Rural people understand it readily and a simplified, life-centered curriculum utilizing the Bible study will be readily accepted by rural people.

"7. The traditional, conservative attitude of rural people concerning religion and righteousness, forms a sound foundation upon which to establish the basis of an adjusted curriculum to meet modern rural needs.

"8. The recognized place of children in the country life is universal. 'The child is an asset in the country and a liability in the city.' The unity of family life and the coöperative and neighbourly processes of agricultural

people form a sound basis for the application of new methods of religious education to life situations.

"9. The meeting of rural life situations seems to develop a marked ingenuity and resourcefulness in childhood and youth which is less characteristic of the childhood and youth of the urban community. The ever present chores of the country, the necessity of making decisions in dynamic situations, and the assumption of considerable routine responsibility early in life, is commonplace in the country. As a result of this experience it has been observed that youth reared in the town and country community adjusts itself more successfully and more readily to trying situations in later life than youth developed under city conditions. Again, the country offers an advantage over city life in the development of personality, resourcefulness and stability of character, which are the modern aims of religious education.

"10. Finally, rural life adapts itself most admirably to the new 'life-centered' plan of religious education. The new adventures in curriculum building, as indicated in earlier quotations, seem to meet a ready response where opportunity has been given for development under intelligent and resourceful leadership in rural situations.

"We believe it may be reasonably assumed that the rural church has something constructive to offer to the whole program of religious education.

"The plea is registered herewith for open-minded discussion of the whole subject to determine whether or not a specialized or adjusted curriculum is really demanded for the rural church. If it is needed, as the writer maintains, how shall the desired adjustments be achieved in the interest of the millions of rural children and youth, whose happiness and destiny depend upon the

effectiveness of the religious instruction and heritage they receive.

"Illustrative materials and human interest examples which will easily occur to the reader, might be presented but would make this chapter too long. It is hoped that any who read this discussion will endeavour to supply the need from a working acquaintance with the current problems of the rural church."

### *Good Prospects*

The professional group offers some encouragement that more attention will be given to the adaptation of the curriculum to rural needs. The International Council of Religious Education has had a committee working on the subject, and there are good prospects that the required unit No. 6, "The Teaching Work of the Church," may be taught with rural implications.

Dr. Harry C. Munro, Director of Adult Field Work of the International Council of Religious Education, seems to think that something is already being done in this direction. He says:

"As I study the most up-to-date religious educational curricula, especially in the elementary field, it seems to me far better adapted to the rural situation than to the urban situation. The large attention given to nature study, to growing things, and to discovering God in the out-of-doors, certainly is ideally adapted to the rural situation, and adapted to the urban situation only as the leader takes pains to take children to parks or other places where they can have first-hand contact with nature. In fact, I believe a scientific survey of the most up-to-date curriculum would prove that it is far more

closely adapted to the typical rural situation than to the typical urban situation."

He goes even further and says:

"The basic difficulty is not one of curricular materials but one of leadership. The leadership problem is not peculiarly a rural problem. In the majority of churches, rural, suburban, or urban, curricular materials for the present must assume a largely untrained leadership and the ministry must begin to look upon development of adequate leadership as its basic function. The 'raw materials' available for such leadership and the motives available for enlisting it are relatively about equal in any typical community whether urban or rural, though rural people frequently have an unwarranted inferiority complex in this respect. That is, leadership resources adequate for rural constituencies are about as plentiful as are leadership resources adequate for urban constituencies.

"A second difficulty more basic than that of curricular materials as such, is found in organization. It is so easy to assume that all the small or 'one room' churches are rural. As a matter of fact satisfactory grading is practiced in relatively few urban churches.

"The assumed analogy with public education ought to be checked at this point. All small public schools are in sparsely settled areas. On account of denominational divisions great numbers of small churches are in thickly settled or even congested areas. The small public school is rural so that adaptation to a small school is adaptation to a rural school. The small church is both urban and rural. The adaptation needed is to the *small* church rather than simply to the rural church.

"The need is not primarily one of change in cur-

riculum content, but in organization of the curriculum for use in the small church, whether urban or rural, and in development of leadership ability in adapting the curriculum or rather in making the curriculum indigenous and experience-centered in life wherever it is being lived."



## VI

### THE TEACHING PROGRAM IN THE RURAL CHURCH

**I**F I were again becoming a country pastor, I would project an all year round evangelistic program of the educational type. Evangelism in the highest and best sense of the word should be the prime aim of the church.

In achieving its work the church functions through worship, preaching, teaching and social service. All of these are of vast importance. No church has a normal development if it neglects any of them. But the greatest of these is teaching. The favourite name by which Jesus was known to His followers was "Master" which means teacher. They were known as "disciples," which means pupils. They were learners in the school of Christ. "He went up into a mountain and when he was set, his disciples came unto him and he opened his mouth and taught them." Jesus was the master teacher. If Jesus put so much emphasis on teaching should we not do the same? In fact, worship, preaching and social service all have important teaching values. All these are dependent upon the proper exercise of the teaching functions of the church.

#### *Educating the Educators*

To educate the educators is the first and most important item in the program. This is largely the task of the

minister. That is one reason why the rural minister should have a specialized training to fit him for leadership among country people. In projecting my program in a rural church, I would consider my educators to be the parents, the Sunday school workers, the church officers, the men of the church, the women of the church and the young people. In the educational program I would consider it in my province as pastor to educate these leadership groups. The country churches in this new day need ministers who are not only trained but who have initiative and originality.

Dr. R. A. Kilburn, Professor of Sociology and Religious Education in the University of Chattanooga, Tennessee, in speaking of the workers, says:

“They who would build a program of Religious Education have unloaded at their workshop the following materials—the pupil, the curriculum and the workers who will carry on the enterprise. . . .

“What methods of teaching shall be used, that is, by what techniques shall the workers guide and control the experience situations by which the pupils are conditioned? Let this question be given an answer immediately. The worker will be a sharer in religious experience with the pupil. Teachers may direct attention to some experiences by authoritarian command and by the compulsion of physical necessity. ‘Spiritual’ experiences are not so controlled. They are received from others by sharing.

“Then, how shall workers be obtained? Here is the ever present problem of leadership. Who has enough experience to share? Who has the proper experience to share? Who has efficient techniques of sharing? Who desires to share? Who, being lifted up, can draw others into his own experience?”

### *The Parents*

I would begin with the parents. There was a time when practically the whole program of religious education was carried on by the parents and the week day school. These schools were conducted mainly under the supervision of the church. This was before the days of the Sunday school and the public school. The public school was instituted to teach religion to the poorer children whose parents were not able to pay tuition, and the Sunday schools were organized primarily as missionary agencies to provide religious instruction for the children of parents of neglected social groups. Recently there was discovered the constitution of the first Sunday school organized in New Providence Church. This was one of the earlier country Sunday schools in America, but the date was as late as 1823.

In this modern age, we have turned over general education to the public schools and religious education to the Sunday schools. God placed the responsibility of educating the children upon the parents and while both of these agencies are valuable auxiliaries, the cry of the hour is to revitalize the religious life of the home. The welfare of the state, the Church and society at large demands that there be a generation of parents trained to give religious education to their children.

If I were again a country pastor, in my visitation in the home, by organized classes, by the distribution of books, at the marriage altar, at the time of birth of children, at their baptism and in my preaching, I would undertake to inculcate a sense of the religious responsibility of the parents and to train them for the performance of their duties as teachers of religion. They

should be trained in child psychology, in the art of teaching, and fundamentally grounded in the truths to be taught.

Dr. Kilburn, in his paper presented at the Institute of Public Affairs, wisely says:

"I do not offer a panacea, but would like to offer for critical thought a program of religious education based upon the characteristics of rural life. The main elements of program building for country people will be stated simply. The farm family and its experiences become the scene of the main effort in religious education. It follows that parents will be the teachers. The experiences of the agricultural face-to-face groups will furnish the mould for the curriculum. Into this the experiences of the race may be poured. Supervision and organization and administration will rest with the specialized personnel of the church.

"The every-day experiences of country people lend themselves readily to the curriculum of religious education. There, day by day, is the miracle of life itself—its inception, its development, its culmination in future generations, going on through eternity. There is the experience of tender care in the husbandry of crop cultivation and the training and guidance of animal life. There, in predominant form, is the stewardship of many things given, not made by hands, but used for increased fruitfulness. There are manifest the laws of life which cannot be broken with impunity. No social conniving can 'get by' the laws of the seasons.

"The farm family and the farm neighbourhood group are strong social units. The amount of social control exerted by them is tremendous. The common industrial enterprise of the family, the mutual aid undertakings in

work and play of the neighbourhood, are the very essence of the service, of the coöperation, and of the brotherly sympathy which religious education emphasizes.

“The church will train the teachers by turning its emphasis to adult education. It will train fathers and mothers to be Christian parents. It will show all the older members of the primary groups how they may more Christianly use the educational control that is naturally theirs. The church will furnish supervisors exceedingly well-trained in the total program of religious education, who will help the natural leaders of the primary groups. The church will organize the program of religious education, taking care that each educational agency in the community shall have opportunity through its representative to put into the experience situation of the primary group whatever it can contribute toward a full and abundant life.

“A simple summary is offered. The characteristics of country people and their environment demand a program of religious education peculiar to themselves. The following program makes use of these peculiar characteristics and eliminates the wastes due to the super-organization necessary in program formulation for the greater complexities of urban life. The church as a central organizing agency will organize and administer the program. It will send supervisors to the scene of experience. The educational scene itself will be the rural primary groups in their every-day experiences, with the older members of the groups as teachers. The educational method will be a sharing by old and young in creative effort.”

Rev. E. E. Sundt, Director of Town and Country



Church Work of the Northern Baptist Church, writes about the value of home training as follows:

"We need not enter into an elaborate consideration of the dangers which confront the rural home. Sufficient to say that with all our conveniences, modern comforts and luxuries, the rural home is probably to-day less effective than ever in character training. Our emphasis upon crops, acreage, machinery, efficiency, etc., has all but excluded religious idealism from our homes. We have been so busy making a living that we have lost our concern in the art of living. Many farmers, according to Professor C. J. Galpin, while successful to the extent of material gains, have lost their children and the more precious character values in the hectic pursuit of possessions.

"If the country church cannot recapture the home and reestablish religious worship, however simple, and succeed in cultivating *family churches*, with the entire family in attendance, there is very little hope of survival for the rural church. Let us welcome modern conveniences and comforts. Let us coöperate with every organization concerned in the economic betterment of rural people. Let us place our forces at the disposal of the Farm Bureau, the County Library, the American Association of Country Life, and work with untiring efforts for better schools, roads, and homes. Let us understand and appreciate all the interests of our people—but let us not surrender in that effort the peculiar and unique mission of Christianity. If the church cannot become the inspirer of ideals, who can? Indeed, who will?"

#### *Church School Workers*

In all that has been said there is no intention of

undervaluing the church school. If the parents are to perform their full functions in the matter of religious education in this complex age, the church school is necessary. If I were a country pastor again, I would pay much attention to the training of my church school officers and teachers. The demand for a trained leadership in the rural areas is more imperious than in the urban, and yet it is here that we find the smallest percentage of credits in leadership training.

Rev. T. K. Currie, Director of Religious Education for the Presbyterian Synod of Virginia, writes:

"This course of credits is not used in the rural churches to any great extent. In the state of Virginia in 1930, 9,884 credits were given on the course by all agencies. Only 32 per cent were given in rural schools. In 1930 there were twenty-eight counties in which no standard credits were awarded. Seventy-one per cent of the white Sunday school membership of Virginia live in the country, yet only 32 per cent of the credits went to rural schools.

"The lack of funds due to low farm income, small church congregations, and inactive church membership explains to some extent the lack of interest in the program of religious education.

"Not only must the leadership in the country church be better trained, but we must provide for the country church better equipment. Many of the rural churches are still using one auditorium with no provision for division into separate class rooms for instruction. Can an adequate program of religious education be promoted efficiently in the average country church with its lack of equipment?"

Most country pastors serve more than one church, and

their attendance upon the sessions of the church school can be only occasional. The lay leadership, therefore, becomes necessarily responsible for its program. Many city churches can afford paid, trained, religious educational workers. These are out of the question in the churches of the rural areas.

If the pastor is to shape the policies of his church school, he must necessarily do it through the training of his lay leadership. This subject has already been treated in Chapter III.

### *Church Officers*

As the officers of the church are the logical leaders of the congregation and are responsible for the policies of the religious educational program, by private conversation and in meetings of the official groups, I would have much discussion with my officers with reference to the organization and administration of the entire program of religious education in the congregation. These officers if possible should be induced to take the leadership training courses in order that they may intelligently supervise the church school, organize and maintain outpost Sunday schools, conduct missionary classes, teach stewardship and promote instruction among the young people.

In this way, the church officials may be trained for the position of supervisors and as a body they become responsible for providing adequate religious educational privileges for all the people within the parish boundaries.

### *Men and Women*

The organizations of the men and of the women may be made very dominant factors in the rural areas for

the promotion of the program of religious education, provided they have the right kind of pastoral leadership. Missionary and stewardship education may be successfully promoted by each of these organizations. Daily Vacation Bible Schools and week day schools of religion are both dependent for success in the rural church on the interest, the intelligence and efficiency of the leadership in the local community. Leadership introduced from outside is more expensive than the budget of the average country church can stand. Also an indigenous leadership may be more acceptable and often more proficient if trained, than one from the outside.

### *The Young People*

The young people of a country congregation constitute its hope. Every rural pastor will recognize the difficulty of doing the things we have been talking about above, but the young people react readily and satisfactorily to the influence of a country pastor who understands them and will give himself sympathetically to the task of developing them for positions of leadership. The task of the rural minister and his church is not to do things for the young people, but to train them to do things for the church and the people whom the church serves and to be pastor's helpers. The young people's organization may be made a mighty factor in training future leaders in the rural church.

Every rural pastor should accompany his young people to summer conferences and see that they get that type of training which will best fit them for the leadership so sorely needed in rural areas. A survey of young people who attend the average young people's conference will reveal the surprisingly small per cent of them which

is drawn from rural areas. This is partly due to the cost which is too great to be borne by the average country church or the parents. This handicap may be overcome by taking provisions from home and camping in tents, or buildings which may be inexpensive. Another reason for the small attendance of young people from country churches is that the conference is held at a time when the farmers are seasonably engaged with their crops, and the youth cannot be spared. Leaders of young people's conferences should consider rural youth in projecting their programs.

### *The Pastor*

The above discussion reveals how vital a matter it is that the country pastor have a thorough course in religious education, and in addition, specialized training in rural leadership.

Rev. T. K. Currie says: "Some feel, and I think they are right, that we will never have an adequate program of religious education in the country churches until we can provide a better trained ministry for the country church. In my own denomination, the Southern Presbyterian, definite instruction on the Country Church has been given in our seminaries in recent years, through our Country Church Department. It is here that we are reaching the heart of this great problem.

"Let the curriculum in colleges and seminaries be improved so that the minister who takes a rural pastorate will feel that he has something of a constructive program to give the leaders of a country parish."

Mr. Currie submits the following questions which leaders in the rural areas might profitably discuss:



“ QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Should the program of religious education be made simpler?
2. Do we need a program for the small country church in addition to what we have?
3. Why is the program of religious education not reaching the country church?
4. What is the present status of the rural minister in regard to his training for his task?
5. How would you suggest that we approach the leaders in a country church to secure their co-operation?
6. How would you provide the necessary training?
7. Is consolidation practical at the present time in very many communities?
8. Would you promote a program even though you had only one auditorium?
9. How would you stimulate interest for better equipment?
10. Can a program be promoted although the income is small? ”

*The Daily Vacation Bible School*

While vacation and week day religious education are of comparatively recent origin, they have become vital factors and no rural church is complete in its program which has failed to develop these two agencies in Christian training. The vacation Bible school began as late as 1877 in Montreal, Canada. A similar school was opened in the Epiphany Baptist Church in New York in the summer of 1898. There were twenty-five schools in that city in 1901 and thirty-three in 1906.

Rev. Victor C. Detty, of Wysox, Pennsylvania, who is a well-known authority in this field, writes as follows:

"The value of the vacation school was soon recognized and in 1910 it was adopted by the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., for work among the immigrant communities and city centres. 'No other agency was so popular as this and no other made quite so ready an approach to homes that were out of touch with the church.' While the first emphasis was missionary, the educational possibilities soon came to be recognized, and it was promoted as a means of the religious education of children of the churches as well as of those in families not connected with churches.

"Since the adoption of the vacation Bible school by the denominational boards responsible for the promotion of religious education, it has grown by leaps and bounds until in 1930 the Presbyterian Churches, U. S. A. alone conducted 2,606 schools. Rev. Homer L. Grice, of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, estimated that in 1924 there were one million, five hundred thousand children touched by vacation Bible schools.

"Two types of schools have grown out of the movement: (1) the local church vacation school, and (2) the interdenominational coöperative vacation school. The first type is promoted by a single church for the benefit of its constituency alone. The second kind unites the various churches in a community for the definite project of having a school for all the boys and girls in the community.

"The minister in the town and country church finds here a very valuable agency for community service.

He may take advantage of its strategic values, among which may be listed the following: 1. It uses a vacation time which otherwise might be wasted or harmful. 2. It has a long term of consecutive days with the advantage of accumulating interest in religion. 3. It has comparatively long daily sessions of two and one-half to three hours as against the one hour session of the Sunday school. 4. It helps to meet the need for more time for systematic religious education. 5. It satisfies the three aims of religious education: (a) evangelism, (b) knowledge of the Bible, and (c) development of religious personality. 6. It utilizes the values of worship, instruction, play and social service."

Rev. Clyde J. Walsh, pastor of a country field in Virginia, has been so successful in daily vacation Bible school, that what he has to say merits our attention. He testifies as follows:

"One of the best features about the daily vacation Bible school is that its program can be adapted to suit your own conditions."

### *Types of Schools*

"In the main, there are two types—the Standard Daily Vacation Bible School and the Lathem Summer Bible School. Between these two there are many variations. The principal difference between the two is that the Standard School has more variety in its program, while the other confines itself principally to Bible memory work and Bible stories. The Standard School usually has handwork in its curriculum and the Lathem School does not. The Lathem School has a very thorough and elaborate graded course in the study of the Bible consisting of thirteen grades and a post-

graduate course of two grades, and enrolls children from three years of age up to sixteen or over. It requires a large teaching force and is especially recommended for large community centres.

"In my opinion the Standard Daily Vacation Bible School is the better adapted for rural and small town communities. The program consists of Bible study, stories, memory work and dramatizations; daily talks on habits, nature, health or missions; memorizing hymns and catechisms; play instruction and handicraft for boys and girls. The course is very elastic and can be successfully carried out in large or small communities."

### *How to Begin*

"It is well to get the coöperation of the whole community and where there are two or more churches in the community they should combine their efforts and have a union school, securing teachers from each of the churches or Sunday schools, and perhaps using the church building which can furnish the best equipment for the school. Sometimes the public school building is used when the school board gives its consent. But I think that it is much better to use your own church equipment even if it isn't as adequate. Children get enough of the public school building during the other nine months of the year. It is better to make them feel that this school is an affair of the church.

"Let it be understood at the very outset that your school is not a denominational affair but is to be open to all the children of the community from the ages of five to fourteen years. I think it is better to begin with these age limits. After all, a church is in a community to serve the whole community and not just its own con-

stituency. When this is understood the pastors and members of other churches will be glad to coöperate. The endorsement of all the churches in the community where it can be secured is the first essential.

"A few attractive posters displayed in public places and stores will get the whole community interested in the school. Frequent announcements from the pulpit and in the Sunday school will keep the matter before the parents as well as the children.

"But the most effective advertisement of all is the street parade which is often given on the opening day. Of all the parades I have ever seen, some of these have been the most beautiful and interesting. Children love to dress up and be on parade. Put a flag in the hand of a child and let him march down the street and he is supremely happy. Floats made by the children themselves out of their own little wagons, tricycles, bicycles, or other playthings, and a prize offered for the best float will add much to the attractiveness and enthusiasm of the parade. Tell them to bring something along to make a noise, a whistle, horn, drum, or anything else, and let them make all the noise they want to. You may be sure that all the parents of the children will be out to see the parade and that every child in the community who isn't in it will want to belong to a school that has such fun connected with it. The children themselves enjoy this feature so much that a number of them have asked me to have the parade every day.

"In rural communities transportation is to be considered. Many of the children may live some distance from the church, perhaps too far to walk in the hot sun. It is oftentimes possible to secure a bus or truck to make a daily trip on the main roads and collect the



children along its route. But when parents get interested, they will gladly make provision for the attendance of their children. Those who have cars will pick up the children along the road and take them along with their own children. I have myself transported as many as eleven children in a five passenger car. Many children will walk two or three miles back and forth to school each day, and usually they are the most regular and punctual pupils we have."

### *Equipment*

"Let's begin with the church building. If you have a Sunday school building you are indeed fortunate, and its regular class rooms can be used. But one thing that a rural church does usually have is plenty of grounds and room to play. The classes can meet out of doors in suitable weather under the shade of trees, or they can meet in the one room of the church auditorium in separate sections. With very little outlay of money these can be separated by curtain partitions. The handwork can be done outside, and really should be. The grounds surrounding the church building afford ample room for play and games.

"Other equipment, such as text-books, handwork materials, memory work cards, etc., may be purchased with but little expense. Text-books for the children are not necessary in most cases. Of course each child should own a Bible or Testament and bring it to school every day. The Bible is the text-book for the daily vacation Bible school. For the beginners a sand table is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. This can be made very easily and the story figures purchased for very little money. But whether you have much or little in the

way of equipment, you can adjust your school to suit your conditions."

### *Faculty*

"By all means, the pastor should be the director of the school. It will give him a personal contact with the children of the community that will compensate him for every minute he puts into it. It may call for some adjustment in his regular schedule and may involve some personal sacrifices, yet I cannot conceive of a better way to utilize his time. The nearest approach to a parent's heart is through his child and the pastor who undertakes this work will not only win the children but their parents as well. The director's work will be to organize and supervise the school, have charge of the opening and closing exercises, possibly giving the devotional talks himself, and to keep the schedule going along its prescribed course. If he cannot do so himself, he should secure a good song leader to take charge of the singing and music each day, for the singing of hymns is one of the leading features of the school.

"As for teachers, the best available are none too good. The first requisite of a teacher is a real love for and interest in the children of the community. Public school teachers are often available for this work and will gladly serve without remuneration if the church is not able to pay them. Besides the teachers, assistants will be needed to help in the memory work and handicraft. If your church is able to do so it should employ well qualified teachers and pay them for their services. However, it is surprising how gladly the women and older girls will serve in this capacity without pay. Almost without exception, those who served one year

have expressed their desire to serve the next year, and I believe that, after all, it is best to have volunteer teachers and assistants provided the term of the school is not too long."

### *The Advantages*

"A two weeks' Bible school in the amount of Bible study accomplished is equivalent to a whole year's Sunday school class period work and you have the advantage of having the children every day, so that their work is more thorough and has greater continuity. I have had children to memorize six or eight whole chapters of the Bible during a two weeks' school. Some have memorized and recited perfectly one of the catechisms of our church in that time besides the required memory work in the Bible. The Bible stories and dramas, the habit talks and missionary hero stories leave a profound impression upon the children. Two girls who attended one of our schools last summer have, through the influence of the school, signified their desire to become missionaries.

"The personal contact between the pastor, teachers, and children weld each other together in everlasting friendship. For the pastor, this contact becomes an entering wedge in leading his boys and girls to Christ. Sometimes at the close of school a decision service is held in which boys and girls are invited to definitely accept Christ as their Saviour.

"The fine spirit of coöperation between the churches in the community in this enterprise brings about better relations between these churches. The forming of a deeper attachment for the church in the hearts of the boys and girls through the daily vacation Bible school often wins them to the church for life. The daily vaca-

tion Bible school is the church expressing itself in the terms of its boyhood and girlhood, ministering to their needs and developing them into more devoted and better informed young Christians. There are many other advantages in such a school and no church can afford to neglect the opportunities it provides for a greater service to its boys and girls."

### *Other Types*

Rev. R. H. Stone and Rev. John Luke of Ashe County, N. C., conduct what they call Christian Chautauquas, which is a variation of the daily vacation Bible school. In addition to the equipment they use a movable tent, which they locate beside the small country church. They begin this campaign as soon as the public schools close and continue until they reopen in the fall, spending from two to four weeks in each place. In addition to the regular daily vacation Bible school program each pastor teaches in his respective school a class of young people which is really a class in training for church membership and Christian living. Each night they hold an evangelistic service, which is attended by practically all the people of the community. Some of the rural churches are conducting singing schools in connection with these vacation enterprises.

The student assistant in New Providence Church conducts neighbourhood week day schools. He gathers the children in the different communities in some pasture field or grove once a week, plays with them for an hour, following with an hour's Biblical instruction and song. These have been very successful, with an attendance in some places of from forty to fifty children. No building is needed and but little equipment.

### *Literature*

There is much attractive and valuable literature on the subject of the daily vacation Bible school, which may be secured by writing to denominational headquarters. This literature will supply the information for methods of financing and for a program and suggestions for materials which could not be included in this brief treatment.

No program in the rural church is complete without Week Day Religious Education. This is of such recent development and vital importance that it will be discussed in the content of the following chapter.

We close this chapter with a brief discussion by Rev. Edwin E. Sundt. He writes about what should be the practical results of religious education in country communities on worship, the developing of Christian character, social service projects, community building and the creating of right public opinion.

### *Worship*

“Because of traditional prejudices, Protestants have assumed that dignity, beauty, silence, proper architecture, orderliness, and diligent preparation of the worship service have not mattered. We are just beginning to discover that the art of worship, when properly cultivated and practiced, will yield far-reaching results. Our sense of God, our appreciation of beauty, our sensitiveness to social evils, and the need of daily strength to live the Christlike life depends upon what happens to our souls when we worship.

“Religious education faces right here its greatest opportunity, for only as we set about to train our people



in real worship will there arise a deeper and higher appreciation of the values true worship creates. For, in worship, the environment, the attitude of the worshipers, and the spirit of the leader matter beyond estimate and we cannot cultivate this spirit nor inspire right attitudes unless we educate our people in these matters.

“Many of us have attended services in rural churches where it was natural to pray, where something unseen lifted our soul to the very throne of grace, and the reverence of those present carried our very selves into His presence. But we can also recall without much effort church services where the shout and the tumult and the hilariousness of the occasion left us weary and caused us to return to our homes empty in soul and mind. We were given stones for bread—entertainment to satisfy our spiritual hunger.

“But how can we create this spirit of worship? The answer is not at all difficult. There must be careful preparation of the order of service and a deliberate effort to carry through the entire period of worship a single-hearted theme. Then, we need the right inner attitudes. We must learn to enter the church worship service in reverence, to omit all visitations until after the service is over, to refrain from conversations and gesticulations to friends and visitors. Congregations must be taught not to impose upon the pastor frivolous matters just as he enters the pulpit and the leader must know that the way he begins the service, the manner in which he opens the Bible, the spirit of his prayers, the quiet assurance of God in his own soul will inspire the entire hour with a new sense of reverence and dignity. Confusions and conversations are inexcusable before and

during services. Let all who come, come in the spirit of humble seeking, in the spirit of prayer and eager expectancy.

"All of this cannot be brought about over night. The pastor must lead, and probably patiently await the development of this spirit. To this end, study courses in worship are recommended for all ages in Sunday school, discussion groups for teachers, prayer meeting topics, and, if it seems practicable, public consideration of what worship really is. It is strictly an educational task of pastor and church. It will involve a study of themes, the hymns we use, the church building, lighting equipment, varieties of worship, and a recognition of the values true worship creates. A program of worship-education will include also a consideration of family worship in homes, radio worship hours, Sunday school worship, and worship experiences out-of-doors."

### *Character Building*

"One of the most challenging tasks before the country church lies within the church school and its possibilities for religious education. Many of our schools have employed ungraded material, the cheapest available literature, used 'just anybody' as teachers, failed to train leaders, and often allowed people whose lives contradicted everything they taught to hold teaching positions.

"By our methods we often teach, unwittingly of course, jealousies, ways of cheating and deceitfulness. Thus, all our schemes that involve competition for attendance and with the promise of a reward as an inducement invariably teach deceitfulness. One pastor has just told me how he uses paper tags, marked 25 cents, 50 cents, and so forth, and 'pays' children for

attendance. When they have accumulated so many 'dollars' they collect a prize. This is bribery. It teaches our youth that one can buy decency and goodness. It places the dollar-mark on what should be utterly free of that brand.

"We must remember also that general talks about honesty, friendship, forgiveness, love and prayer, do not necessarily result in action. Much of our Sunday school teaching is only sermonizing and how often the teacher has been shocked after a 'lesson' on honesty or friendliness to discover that five minutes later her scholars proved that they had forgotten both! This suggests that we must be more specific. In order to be more specific, we need to see friendship, for example, with its possibilities in the life of the child who sits before us and afford him the opportunity to express the principles we have considered in some friendly deed. I remember a congregation which was asked to prove its friendliness to the unchurched families in the community after a sermon on friendship. The preacher had purposely planned only a ten minute address and proposed to have his congregation experience the joy of friendliness by putting into effect the good things he suggested. Half of the congregation rebelled. They refused to visit so and so because they were not on good terms with those people. It is always much simpler to talk about friendship in a class room or listen to a sermon than to actually live it. Yet, one of the accepted education principles is that 'we learn by doing.' And it may be that one reason why so few Sunday school scholars or church people appreciate the meaning of Christian living is because we *'hear but do not do the things'* we have listened to.

"The next job in rural church schools will be to make possible the expression of ideals and through such expressions make vital Christian principles. Think of co-operation. How often this has been talked about in rural churches; but how little there actually is! Or of peace and good will; and recall how great the need of practicing some of it in rural communities! Or of forgiveness, and how slow some rural families are in forgiving one another!

"We must stress the kind of religious education that enables people to do what we teach and this will require higher grade teachers and leadership plus week-day activities which the class room does not afford."

### *Social Service Projects*

"One of the needs in rural communities is the enlistment of as many people as possible in service. This is such a neglected area that I feel justified in including it here. Usually it is delegated to the pastor; if anyone is sick or in need or distress, he and he alone responds. Blessed is the pastor who can lead his people to share these experiences with him.

"It will be most profitable perhaps to list a number of projects, every one of which has been put into practice by some rural congregation or pastor. There are twenty-four days, holy days and holidays, every year, which the country church can use as a rallying occasion for some purpose. No one church makes use of all, but all have been observed by some churches. Let me enumerate the neglected days rather than those we commonly observe: Rural Life Sunday which falls every fifth Sunday after Easter; Memorial Day, when the memory of local heroes and servants of the community

should be honoured; Baccalaureate Sunday, when Public and High School students attend; Arbour Day; Labour Day; Armistice Day; Thanksgiving Day and Consecration Day.

“In many communities where the foreign born live are national days which the church can encourage and promote. I know of one church where a large number of Czechs live, that observed the Tenth Anniversary of the Founding of the Czechoslovakian Republic. Another church has an annual ‘Old Settlers’ Day,’ etc.

“When a young couple begin the making of a new home, why not dedicate that home? Many churches do this. Saturday night, also, is a challenge to the church in many country towns. Here hundreds gather, but, as a rule, the church is closed. The church should be kept open and provide a place of rest and retreat for weary mothers and children from their shopping and much walking about. Open air religious services with good music may be held in some conspicuous place.

“Some churches encourage children in raising pigs or calves for the purpose of donating the sale price to missionary causes. At least one church that I know seeks to locate desirable farmers in the neighbourhood and helps to dispose of available property.

“In coöperation with the county nurse, or school nurse, and the country doctor, the church can arrange educational lectures and discussion groups and minister to many who are ill but unable to secure the best possible medical attention. Many churches provide hospital care for those in need.

“Christmas time is an occasion for giving, rather than getting. The ‘White Gift’ service lends itself admirably to this purpose. Good roads and comfortable automo-



biles make transportation possible at little or no cost to the church. Mail and telephone may be used to advertise various occasions. Rural people respond very readily to intelligent advertisements in local weeklies and periodicals. Many communities have no libraries, and where a 'Library on Wheels' is available, the church could guide the reading interests of people.

"Most of our rural churches could be improved in equipment, use higher grade hymnals, probably secure a new pulpit Bible, piano, or lighting arrangement. All of this may become a worthy project that will afford expression for our religious enthusiasm. The exterior may be improved. Why is it that so few country churches have well-cared-for lawns or yards? A few flowers, a little shrubbery here and there will immeasurably add to the beauty of the church. Paint is always one of the best methods of removing that dismal appearance from the old church, and walks and walls should be kept in good repair. One small rural church distributes annually over 500 spruce trees to its young people for beautification of the community. The dedication of these trees is a most inspiring occasion; and in the course of a few years, a barren, treeless country is assuming new colour and beauty."

### *Religious Education and the Community*

"Where the law does not permit, or local conditions prevent week day religious education, numerous occasions for valuable influences remain open to the church. Most teachers will gladly coöperate in having neighbourhood socials, where stereopticon slides and singing have a part. The pastor is generally welcome in any school, and by his friendliness and tact, can secure

frequent hearings. The schoolhouse is often central and may be used by the church for outpost Sunday schools, classes in Americanization, and many other educational projects. It can also serve as the transportation point from which, at certain hours on Sunday, those who desire may be transported to church.

"Population centres, no matter how small, provide another opportunity. Here are possibilities of having a Sunday school, or play hours on Saturday, or vacation schools in the summer, or Saturday schools during the winter, or story hours conducted by trained young people. Social occasions have an immense value and athletics always appeal to country youth. Hundreds of country churches transport people from such centres to the church. Here, also, may be used classes for mothers in health, hygiene, cooking, etc., in coöperation with the school and Farm Bureau.

"The church building should, if possible, be the centre of many community activities. Let it be known that local organizations are free to use whatever equipment the church has to offer as frequently as possible. Persist in advertising the church and its coöperative spirit in the community. If other churches in a given area will not surrender the competitive spirit in this matter, you have a moral right to make your church central and known as such."

### *Religious Education and Creating Public Opinion*

"I cannot close without a brief consideration of this important phase. Multitudes of young people move to the larger towns and cities. Indeed, many of our adults follow or precede them. But what of these people who have lived in our midst and have entered that dreadful

conglomeration called 'city life' without any moral ideals compelling religious convictions?

"Religious education in the country must include, besides its customary Biblical teachings and message of ecclesiastical import, serious and adequate consideration of such topics as world peace, disarmament, the channels through which the nations are labouring coöperatively to maintain peace.

"Farming is frequently spoken of as an 'industry,' yet we have not taken time to develop real convictions and ideals as to its rightful place in the nation or its possibilities and dangers. We are certainly discovering that, in the midst of our over-abundance, there can be want; though our barns are bursting with grain, thousands are starving; though we have efficient farming, we have not as yet discovered equally effective methods of distribution. Alongside of our prosperity is hunger; our wealth, poverty; and our muchness in things, spiritual and moral impotency. It seems to me that no other agency stands where the country church does and to no other organization is the challenge as clearly directed. What can we say other than Christ said, what can we teach concerning profits and crops and larger barns other than what He taught when He said that man may gain the whole world and lose himself and that the tragedy of this loss through gain is the greatest disaster that can befall any people.

"For a generation, everybody has preached coöperation. Coöperation entered simultaneously our economic and educational world. It is gradually replacing former methods in international affairs. But in rural religion we are a long sea mile from any effective and honest co-operation. We continue to insist that ecclesiastical

organizations rather than life have supreme value; that labels are more important than the welfare of people; that differences matter more than the things upon which we agree. Somehow, every rural worker must give himself to the elimination of this and be willing, if necessary, to pay the price of a prophet. Our hope lies in training people to think clearly in these matters and this is the task of religious education.

"We all believe in brotherhood; but so often community feuds, 'sectional' misunderstandings and ill feelings deny our doctrine. We enter the house of God and sing about brotherhood only to go out and preach by practice that we are not children of the same Father-God, and need not be concerned in the welfare of all. We must learn that whatever of good or evil befalls a single group or family or individual in our community—nay, in the nation and the world at large—is our personal misfortune or gain. If we cannot make real the brotherhood of all men in our little towns and communities and churches, we certainly have no reason to expect much progress in the world at large.

"The entire subject of temperance and law observance needs immediate attention. So does our whole missionary program and the place of denominations in rural communities. The Christian message is one of challenge and non-conformity to the present world order. We will live or perish in proportion to our concern with these practical principles which Christ taught."

## VII

### WEEK DAY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

IN the first chapter we saw the wide-spread neglect of religious instruction in America. Under present conditions the week day church school must be made a definite part of the program of religious education if the rural church is to provide adequate religious instruction for all of the youth in the community.

In a number of cities in America this form of school has passed the experimental stage. There are in Ohio 362 such schools in one hundred different centres, with an enrollment of 64,890 students. In New York state, 396 such schools in one hundred and nine centres have an enrollment of 37,903. After these schools had been in operation for only about six years in Dayton, Ohio, there were about 13,000 children enrolled. These required sixteen teachers with a full-time director, office help and a part time paid visitor. Pastors, public school superintendents, police and probation officers are enthusiastic in their praise of the plan wherever it has been given a fair trial. There lies before me a long list of testimonials to the practical and beneficial character of the week day church school.

#### *Early Education in America*

Rev. Minor C. Miller, General Secretary, Virginia Council of Religious Education, discusses in an able way



the historical developments in America which have made week day religious education a necessity. He writes:

“When our forefathers first established schools in America, they were thinking definitely about the religious education of their children. All education was then in the hands of the church and the idea that Jehovah had revealed Himself authoritatively in the Bible was the very heart of Protestant doctrine. Protestants also believed that every person ought to be able to read and interpret the Bible for himself. These principles were held to be self-evident and though practice varied, the leaders in each of the colonies were deeply interested in educating the people in the basic principles of religion which were found in the one Book—the *Bible*.

“The Bible and religion occupied a central place in all types of schools during the Colonial period. The management of every school was concerned primarily about the religious education of the students. Every teacher was charged with distinctly religious duties. The curriculum in all of the schools was predominantly religious. The entire educational program was designed to develop *God-consciousness*, and this ideal was reflected in the organization, management, curriculum, choice of instructors and the entire educational program. The terms, *Sunday church school* and *week day church school* were then unknown. All schools were *schools of religion* and the educational process went forward as a unit under the management and supervision of the church.”

### *The Change in Emphasis*

“After the Revolutionary War, many changes were

made in connection with the development of education in America. The leaders of the period, remembering the persecution and oppression in Europe, resolved to establish a government which would forever guarantee the principle of religious freedom. Thomas Jefferson was a pioneer in the movement to safeguard religious freedom and also to establish a system of public education, as the most effective guarantee of all of our fundamental liberties. He and other leaders clearly recognized that education must be made a matter of state or governmental concern and as this idea gained ground, it was clearly seen that religion could not occupy a central place in public education. It soon became evident that the state would undertake to educate the people in all fields of knowledge and experience except religion and that the church would still have to be responsible for maintaining an effective system of religious education. Jefferson was not opposed to religious education and neither was he opposed to a practical and workable plan of coöperation between the recognized agencies of public education and religious education."

### *The Church and State*

Church and state should be separate and yet the state which is not controlled and dominated by Christian principles which can be promulgated successfully only by the church is doomed to failure.

Possibly we have carried the separation of church and state too far, much farther than Jefferson intended. The policy of the separation of the church and state has been necessary because of the tendency of the church to usurp undue authority and to meddle in the policies and administration affairs of the state on the one hand,

and the state to dominate the policies of the church on the other. When religion is ignored in the schools, from those of the most primary nature that are taught in one room to the state university, there is created in the minds of the students the idea that religion and things for which it stands are of secondary consideration. Many of the evils of our American life are the result of the divorcement of religion from the thinking of our people in the school.

Jefferson, the author of religious freedom and the founder of the University of Virginia, fought the battles of the Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers, who had been the unhappy victims of the policies of a state church. He lived in an age when there was a great deal of bitterness among the denominations. Some of the sects wanted to dictate what everybody else should believe and practice. No wonder he declared: "I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of men." Yet he recognized that there ought to be some way by which the values of religion might be preserved in education. He believed thoroughly in the contributions which the religion of peace, reason and morality had to make to the state and the welfare of society. This is proved by the letter which he wrote to Thomas Cooper in 1822. Speaking of the University of Virginia, he says:

"In our University there is no professorship of divinity. A handle has been made of this to disseminate an idea that this is an institution not merely of no religion, but against all religion. An occasion was taken at the last meeting of the Visitors to bring forward an idea that might silence this calumny, which weighed on the minds of some honest friends to the institution. In

our annual report to the Legislature, after stating the constitutional reasons against a public establishment of any religious instruction, we suggest the expediency of encouraging the different religious sects to establish, each for itself, a professorship of their own tenets, on the confines of the University, so near as that their students may attend the lectures there, and have the full use of our library, and every other accommodation we can give them; preserving, however, their independence of us and of each other. This fills the chasm objected to ours, as a defect in an institution professing to give instruction in all useful sciences. I think this invitation will be accepted by some sects from candid intentions, and by others from jealousy and rivalry. And by bringing the sects together, and mixing them with the mass of other students, we shall soften their asperities, liberalize and neutralize their prejudices, and make the general religion a religion of peace, reason and morality."

### *Eternal Vigilance*

The church is an institution of faith and friendliness, faith in God and friendliness toward man; which means friendliness toward the institutions of man which have been found necessary for the promotion of social order. Eternal vigilance for and untiring endeavour on behalf of the great principles which are the revelations of God, constitute the price which the church has to pay for the fulfilment of its divinely appointed task.

The opportunities which are afforded by the week day church school constitute a challenge which the church must accept if it is to meet the present crisis. As Rev. Minor Miller well says: "The Sunday church school, as now conducted, will not be able to give the masses a

religious education. The Sunday church school does not reach the masses and its program is woefully inadequate and ineffective. What is to be done to improve the situation? Will religion have to pass in rural areas in America as an active influence on the conduct of the masses? Will the Protestant church have to accept the situation as it is and leave the masses of American youth in ignorance of those values for which it has so long contended? There is a way out. The Protestant church will find a way to teach children and youth in the towns and open country in America.

"In the mind of many representative church leaders, the week day school of religion offers a practical approach to a solution of the problem of religious education for rural America."

Dr. Walter Albion Squires, Director of Week Day and Vacation Church Schools of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., Philadelphia, Pa., realizing the importance of the situation, writes: "It is a significant fact that the Institute of Public Affairs, holding its sessions in one of the great universities of the nation, has seen fit to include among its conferences a consideration of religious education in the rural church. The series of round table conferences which have been planned by the Institute deal with some of the outstanding economic and social problems of our times. The presence of a conference on religious education in the rural church in this list of great problems, indicates that the people who planned the program recognize the fact that religion has a contribution to make toward the solution of the gravest problems of our day. It indicates that they recognize the importance of the rural church as an agency of religious education, and as an indispensable



factor in the solution of the problems which face our civilization. These great truths have been recognized by those who planned these round table conferences and have been discussed at length in other papers. I am to discuss a specific phase of religious education for the rural church or community, namely, the Week Day Church School.

"Week day religious education is a comparatively new undertaking. The first week day church schools conducted on a community-wide plan were organized in Gary, Indiana, in 1914. It was several years after this date that the first rural week day church schools were started, so the phase of the work which we are to consider has been under way for only a dozen years or so. During that period, however, experimentation in this field has been quite varied and extensive. Several types of rural week day religious education have been developed, and it may be well for us to consider briefly some of these types and the possible value of each as a contribution toward the solution of our problems connected with rural religious education."

*Organized by Sunday School Missionaries*

"The Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., maintains a force of about 150 Sunday school missionaries. Other denominations have a similar force of workers as a part of their home missions organization. I speak chiefly concerning the Presbyterian work because of the fact that I am better informed concerning it than I am concerning the work of other denominations. These Sunday school missionaries of the Presbyterian denomination have made a notable contribution to rural week day religious education. Last year they organized over

seven thousand rural week day church school classes, many of them in communities so remote from our great centres of population that it has been found impossible to maintain a Sunday school within them.

“The plan followed by these missionaries is very simple. They approach the school board of a rural public school and likewise confer with the teacher of the school. If the board is willing and the teacher favours the plan, they arrange for the dismissal of the public school one hour early on one day of the week. Pupils whose parents wish them to do so are allowed to go to their homes during this hour, but as a matter of fact, all the children usually remain for the religious instruction and Bible study given during that period. In most cases the public school teacher conducts the Bible class period, though it is sometimes conducted by the missionary, himself, or some other person who is chosen for the task. The missionary is provided with a course of study, in the form of a text-book for the teacher and attractive materials for the pupils which are usually supplied to the school free of cost.

“The system which I have described is far from ideal, it is true. There is hardly anything resembling supervision, since the missionary does not often find it possible to visit the school after it is started. The work is ungraded. It cannot be introduced into many schools because of the opposition of school boards, or the unwillingness of the public school teacher to teach religious subjects. Objections against the plan have been urged on the grounds that it violates the fundamental principle of our constitution which provides for the separation of church and state. Nevertheless, the plan has grown and it has brought religious instruction to over 60,000 chil-

dren who, in most cases, were beyond the reach of any Sunday school. It has demonstrated the fact that a week day church school can be maintained, if a community really desires that this be done."

*Conducted by Pastors of Rural Churches*

"I must at least mention what certain pastors of rural churches have done in the week day church school field. A specific case will serve as an illustration. In a certain township of Michigan there were, a few years ago, three rural Sunday schools. The total enrollment of children of school age in these schools was about 150. There were in the public schools of the township approximately 1,000 children. A pastor obtained permission to go into a rural public school of the township for one period a week, to give Bible instruction. The experiment seemed so successful and so acceptable to parents, that the plan has since been extended to all the public schools of the township, and at the present time, of the thousand children in the public schools, practically every one is receiving at least some Bible instruction from this pastor and two women who have been employed to help him in the work. Again, we must admit that the plan described is far from ideal. The work is ungraded. In some cases the religious instruction consists of little more than the telling of a Bible story by the pastor or one of his helpers, but notwithstanding these shortcomings the achievement of this humble servant of the church and his faithful assistants is worthy of our consideration. If all rural pastors were doing something of the kind, the army of spiritually illiterate youths in our land would soon be noticeably reduced."

*The Larger Parish Plan*

“Significant progress toward the solution of many rural church problems has been achieved through what has been called ‘The Larger Parish Plan.’ Week day religious education is nearly always a part of the educational program carried on by such a parish. I shall describe briefly two different kinds of week day religious education carried on by these larger parishes. Both of the systems which I shall mention happen to be located in the State of New York, but there are a good many others in different parts of the nation.

“The Tobey Larger Parish is located in Tompkins County, New York, not far from the city of Ithaca. Some churches in Ithaca help to support this rural parish, looking upon it as a part of their share in the home missions enterprise. In the same county there are two other larger parishes, known as the Enfield Falls Parish, and the Groton Community Parish. These three larger parishes, together with their supporting churches in the city of Ithaca, employ six full-time directors of religious education. One of the important tasks of these directors is the carrying on of week day religious education. Last year they taught in ninety-one different classes in the rural public school buildings. These directors, being trained religious educators, the work done is of a high type, notwithstanding the limitations connected with a one-room school building and the necessity of combining certain public school grades in the church school classes. The plan is looked upon with favour by the rural communities, and thus far no public school has been closed to the week day church school teachers. A splendid type of religious education is thus

being made available for the children of the coöperating parishes.

"A larger parish has been established near Castle Creek, Broom County, New York. Week day religious education is a prominent factor in the educational program carried on in this Broom County Larger Parish. The plan, however, differs from that carried on by the larger parishes near Ithaca. In the Mount Ettrick Larger Parish, as the Broom County enterprise is called, the week day religious instruction is given by the public school teachers, under the supervision of one of the directors of religious education connected with the larger parish.

"This plan was set in operation three years ago in eight rural schools. The number of schools has since increased to seventeen. Text-books are provided for the week day church school classes. Pastors of churches included in the larger parish visit the week day church school classes on a regular schedule. The plan is given enthusiastic support by the people living within the bounds of the larger parish and nearly all the available children are regularly in attendance at the church school classes."

Week day church schools organized and maintained by county councils of religious education will be discussed later in this chapter by Rev. Minor C. Miller.

There are some difficulties in executing a week day religious educational program in the rural districts. But the obstacles are not insurmountable. Sometimes the churches are too far removed to be used or lack adequate equipment for classroom work. However, in most rural areas there is no objection to using the public school building, provided the denominations are repre-



sented on the county council of religious education and join in support of the program.

A fine example of this is found in Rockingham County, Virginia, where, under the leadership of Rev. Minor C. Miller, General Secretary of the Council of Religious Education of Virginia, for about four years a successful project has been in operation. The Rockingham County Council of Religious Education, composed of the representatives of all the leading denominations in the county, has been able to raise a budget sufficient to support the work. A trained teacher has been secured, who reaches ten schools for two hours each per week. Eight of these schools are in the rural areas. The children are taught on released time at the request of the parents. In about one-half of the schools the attendance has been 100 per cent of the public school classes of the same grade. Pastors, patrons and teachers are almost unanimous in their praise of the plan as it is operating in that county.

Mr. Miller discusses the matter as follows:

### *Definition*

"There has been much confusion as to the real meaning of the term, *week day school of religion*. Some have used the term rather loosely and have assumed that every week day Bible class or other religious instruction during the week should properly be termed a *week day school of religion*. This view is not at all in harmony with the original meaning of the term and neither is it in harmony with the type of school under discussion in this paper. Briefly stated, the week day school of religion, as here described, is a school conducted by a group of coöperating churches through a council of

religious education or other appropriate board or committee, in coöperation with the public schools on the basis of *released time* and to which pupils go at stated periods during the week upon written request of their parents. It is also contemplated that the week day school of religion shall be financed and supervised by the coöperating churches and that the instruction offered shall be on such a high professional basis that it shall equal, grade for grade, the instruction offered in the public schools of the community."

### *Promotion*

"The Virginia Council of Religious Education began to promote week day religious education in rural communities in Virginia approximately five years before any week day schools were put into operation. The idea was presented at district and county conventions and before ministerial associations and other groups. Special conferences were arranged to which both ministers and selected laymen were invited. At these conferences information was given about the operation of week day schools in other communities in different parts of the country. There was always opportunity for asking questions and for a free and frank expression of views. Literature was frequently distributed and every possible means were used to acquaint representative leaders in different counties throughout the state with the week day school idea."

### *Operated Through County Councils*

"Three county councils in Virginia started schools in the fall of 1929—Arlington, Fairfax and Rockingham. Arlington and Fairfax are just across the Potomac River

from Washington. Arlington may be described as a county having a number of small towns rather close together but it has no city. The population is largely composed of government workers from Washington. Fairfax is distinctly rural, the largest town having only about 1,600 people. Rockingham County is an agricultural county with a population of 30,000. The county seat is a small city of approximately 6,000 population.

"The Arlington and Fairfax County Councils of Religious Education formed a joint board. In Rockingham, the week day schools and all other types of community religious education are under the direct supervision of the county council. The county councils are directly responsible to the churches. Each council elects its own officers and committees."

### *Relation to the Public Schools*

"From the beginning, the relations with the public school authorities have been most cordial. In the early stages of the movement in each county, an effort was made to acquaint the public school authorities with the week day school idea. Two years before schools were started in Arlington County, the county superintendent of schools at a county Sunday school convention, spoke substantially as follows:

"'I have studied for some years the problem of religious education in relation to public education. I am convinced that there are some things which ought to be done that we of the public schools cannot do. I would like to recommend to the county school board that they release the children from the public schools in this county from one to two hours per week as soon as the churches provide schools as good as ours.'

"In Rockingham County, the county council asked the school board to grant permission for children of the fifth and sixth grades to be released for one hour a week in ten public schools, as a basis for making the experiment the first year. The school board studied the question for several months and *voted to grant permission to have children of all the grades released for two hours per week in all the schools of the county.*

"It should be pointed out that in Virginia there is no law on the question of released time. The very first step in promotion of this movement was to approach the state superintendent of public instruction. He gave assurance of his interest in the movement. From the very first, the public school authorities in the counties where work has been started have been entirely sympathetic and coöperative.

"In Arlington County, classes were held in churches adjacent to the public school buildings. In Fairfax and Rockingham, classes are held in the public school buildings. At first, there was no thought of using these buildings. When the plan was explained to the school boards in Fairfax and Rockingham, these boards suggested, and rather urged, that they be used. This presents considerable saving in time and expense. No objection at all has been raised to using the buildings."

### *Grades and Scope of Work*

"Work is now offered for pupils of the fifth and sixth grades. In Arlington, the schools are being operated in six communities and in Fairfax in four communities. In Rockingham, schools are in operation in nine communities in the county and in two communities in Harrisonburg, the county seat town. It is the plan to extend

the work to additional grades and to other communities in each county as soon as resources are available."

### *Curriculum*

"The pupils are provided with Bibles, hymn books and note-books. No other text-books are used. The Educational Committee of each county council approved the general outlines for the courses and it was announced that these outlines would be given in mimeographed form to any minister or other person desiring to see them. Few requests have been made for such outlines."

For further information about curriculum material write to the International Council of Religious Education, 203 North Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, or your own denominational board. Especially helpful literature on this subject may be secured by writing to the Sunday School Board of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., Philadelphia, Pa.

### *Supervision and Instruction*

"The work was begun on a very meagre basis. In Arlington and Fairfax, one person was employed and she has been the supervisor and instructor in the ten centres in the two counties. In Rockingham one person was employed to handle all of the work the first year. At the beginning of the second year in Rockingham, two part time instructors were employed to assist the director. These teachers live in the county seat towns and go out each day to their several schools. They usually go to two different schools each day. This gives them a full teaching program for the week. These instructors are professionally trained in religious education and



they are in every way as well qualified educationally as the very best public school teachers in the respective counties."

### *Finances*

"The work in the three counties is financed by free will contributions from churches, Sunday schools and individuals. Churches, Sunday schools, classes and other organizations are invited to make contributions, but no attempt has been made to apportion a particular allotment to any church or organization. Each county has an active finance committee and each year subscriptions are taken from those interested in the work. Many churches and Sunday schools make small contributions but by far the largest proportion of the budget is secured from interested individuals. There have been no large contributions—the usual gifts range between five and twenty-five dollars."

### *Results*

"The work has been popular with ministers, public school officials, parents and children in the three counties. The county superintendents of public schools in each county have prepared statements giving strong endorsement of the work. Everyone acquainted with the work recognizes that the children are being given religious instruction on the same level of efficiency as the work of the public schools. The work is much appreciated by the parents and by the children themselves.

"No child has been enrolled except on the written application of parent or guardian. Coöperation at this point has been excellent. In Rockingham County, more than 96 per cent of the available children in grades

five and six in the public schools where religious education is offered are now enrolled in the week day schools. In Arlington and Fairfax Counties more than 71 per cent of the available children are enrolled.

“ Church leaders are beginning to say, ‘ We have at last found a way to teach religion to the children of the county. Let us extend the work to additional grades and to every school in the county and we will be actually reaching the masses with religious instruction on the same level of efficiency as prevails in the public schools.’ ”

### *What of the Future*

“ Other communities in Virginia have been watching with considerable interest the experiment in the three counties. It is significant to note that within the last six months several other county councils of religious education have appointed committees to study the movement and to make plans for launching week day schools. The people are coming to feel that this work is as much needed in the rural sections as in the cities and that *the schools are practical and workable in rural areas.*

“ It is not at all clear as the movement develops that it will be possible to employ all teachers who are as well trained professionally in religious education as those first employed in the original experiment. It is very clear, however, that the person who heads the work in a county must be thoroughly trained in both public education and religious education. It may be that as the movement develops, several counties will unite in employing a thoroughly trained supervisor and then employ in each county the best possible instructors who have had successful experience in public education. This policy would seem to be in the interest of economy.

It would then be the business of the supervisor to give during the summer months and throughout the school year very practical help in training and supervising her staff of teachers in the several counties for which she is responsible.

“It seems very clear that week day religious education in rural areas will have to be undertaken on a thoroughly coöperative basis. Church groups are small and it is little short of folly to think that any one or two of these groups in a county will be able to exert enough influence to secure the favourable coöperation of the public school authorities. Religious education is a common problem and all church groups will need to unite on a practical and workable plan of education that they may prevent a common evil from overwhelming them.

“County councils of religious education will certainly find a new field of service in promoting and supervising week day schools of religion. Indeed, it would seem that the promotion of week day schools of religion in rural America would be a sufficient motive for the organization of new county councils in many parts of the country. With the advent of good roads and consolidated public schools in rural areas, the week day school of religion is as practical in rural communities as in the cities. On the whole, Sunday schools are poorer in the country than in the cities and for this reason week day schools of religion are more needed in rural than in urban communities. It is probable also that the problems of organization and management in rural areas are not quite so complex as in the centres of population. Certainly the movement should be carefully studied by all agencies of religious education, and it should receive

the sympathetic coöperation and guidance of all national and state agencies."

### *Testimonials*

In the Round Table discussion at the University of Virginia on this subject, Mr. A. L. Bennett, Superintendent of Public Instruction of Albemarle County, Virginia, spoke as follows: "In the training of our boys and girls public schools were first established for training in religion. At present religion cannot be taught as it can in a private school. But using this plan by which there is coöperation with the churches and parents, there is no reason why it cannot be taught in our public schools. Speaking for myself, I would much rather my boy be taught the truths of the Christian religion than about the Greek and Roman gods. This is a movement that is going to sweep the state, but if it is going to be as inefficient as our Sunday schools, I do not want it. But I hope it will be as well organized, as efficiently conducted and of as high a type as the instruction we are offering in our public schools. When this is done and only then can it truthfully be said that we are educating our children."

Following Mr. Bennett, Hon. J. A. Garber, formerly member of the United States Congress and a prominent Christian layman of Rockingham County, Virginia, said: "I think we have reached a new day in educational work in the State of Virginia, when leaders recognize the incompleteness of the educational program. If we are educating for citizenship, that education cannot be complete unless it takes into account the spiritual side of the boy or girl. Character cannot be fully developed simply from the mental side. The state has entirely

ignored for many years the idea of giving religious training. The home has gotten away from teaching the boy and girl religion. The only way the church can do this is to combine with the school and set up a comprehensive program. I think the state has gone too far if it takes the position that religious training cannot be given in the public school. We cannot separate the church and state entirely. It will be a happy day for us when we realize that it is not logical to try to separate our youth into two distinct personalities—the mental and the spiritual. We must try to bring together a coöperative program that will train the boy and girl spiritually as well as mentally. The boy or girl educated only mentally is more dangerous than if not educated at all. We must realize that our penitentiaries are filled up with people who are better trained mentally than we can ever hope to be. There is the necessity of teaching manhood and character. The state could do a great many things which would be more dangerous than this program that we are discussing in this Round Table.”

### *Conclusions*

Dr. W. A. Squires, who is probably the best authority in America on the subject of week day religious education, continues this chapter in the following discussion:

“Four different types of rural week day religious education have been discussed. The last two of these plans are especially worthy of our attention. The Larger Parish Plan and the County Council Plan for carrying on week day religious education in rural America seem to promise methods by which religious nurture can be brought to practically all the children of the nation. Nor are the first two plans unworthy of our interest and



support. They will be needed for a long time in many of our thinly-peopled areas, and are capable of becoming an educational agency which the church ought not to despise. In all four of these ways, and in others which I have not mentioned, the week day church school movement is making its impact on rural America. We need to give the movement our hearty support in all its phases. If we cannot have at once the more desirable form in which the religious instruction is given by highly trained teachers of religion, let us remember that many a consecrated country pastor, or frontier Sunday school missionary, is quite capable of teaching the Bible and of imparting to children and youth the important religious principles which have made America great, and without which our attainments in civilization and culture will fall into speedy decay.

“Perhaps the plans which I have described have caused something akin to alarm in some of our readers. Perhaps some people have felt that this whole procedure is moving forward on dangerous ground, that the fundamental principle of our government which provides for the separation of church and state is by it put in jeopardy. To such I would say a few words in closing. The separation of church and state was sought by our forefathers, not to hamper religion, but to encourage religion and make men ‘free in the exercise thereof.’ They had no thought of secularizing education, when they wrote this provision into our Constitution. They were seeking to avoid the evils which inevitably appear with an established state religion. They were determined that no one denomination should have an advantage over other denominations in America through governmental favour. So long as these ends are secured by any plan of

coöperation between church and state in education, the provisions of our Constitution are safeguarded. Protestants must not seek any type of coöperation with the public schools which may not be granted likewise to Roman Catholics and Jews. This is the case with the 'released time plan' which is the basis of the week day church school plan. Any recognized religious body has the right to receive their children on exactly the same conditions that the Protestant children are dismissed. If public school buildings are used for Protestant classes in religion, the same privileges must be extended to such other religious bodies as desire it. When these principles of justice and equity are safeguarded, there is nothing whatever in the week day church school plan which violates either in letter or spirit the intention of our fundamental law."

In the closing chapter of this book we propose to discuss the coöperation of the rural church and the public school. Dr. Squires closes this chapter as follows:

"The facts which I have stated certainly indicate the importance of the week day church school as an agency of religious education in our rural communities. It is not too much to say that it is a key which will unlock for us a larger and more glorious future for those humble schools of the church, which, beside the country road and in the midst of the wide-spread fields, have always been a source of spiritual ideals and moral forces and without the help of which our great cities would sink into swift moral and spiritual decay. If we are wise and recognize the indispensable part which rural religious education must play in the destiny of the nation, we will cherish and seek to perfect the rural week day church school."

## VIII

### THE RURAL CHURCH AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

**P**UBLIC education has grown in a marvelous way though at a tremendous cost. This development has taken place not only in the cities but also in the rural areas. During the last fifteen years, the average attendance of elementary and secondary schools has increased about 54 per cent, while the population of the country has increased only 28 per cent. In recent years rural education has made remarkable advances. Consolidated rural high schools are increasing at the rate of over 1,000 per year in America. The state is demanding more and more that the men and women who are teaching in these schools must have not only a college and university diploma but they must receive in addition a technical training in rural education to prepare them for their particular task. To-day there are as many men and women graduating from the great universities with advanced degrees as there were graduating with college diplomas twenty years ago. There are as many students graduating in our colleges now as there were graduating from the high schools then. There are as many pupils finishing high school now as there were completing the grades at that time. Much of this has come because the country people possess enhanced educational advantages.

The higher and broader education given to our young people is like the plowing of a field. Their minds are

turned over ready for the seed and where good seed has not been sown, weeds are the inevitable crop. Young people are being detoured from the faith of their fathers and they have found no satisfactory and stabilizing religious convictions as a substitute. On account of the lack of the stabilizing and restraining influence of religion, many things have developed in modern society which should give us grave concern.

The American venture has been far from satisfactory. Our later developments have not fulfilled the hopes of our beginnings. At the Institute of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, on Sunday evening, June 28, 1931, Dr. Luther A. Weigle, Dean of the Divinity School, Yale University, gave an address on "Religion and Public Education." His address is so pertinent to what we have been saying that I quote him as follows, the headings being my own:

### *Religious Freedom*

"The foundations of America were laid in religious faith. The great majority of those who have crossed the ocean to people this land have been men and women of religious conviction, and many of them came to America in order that they might have freedom to worship God as conscience bade them.

"America is a land of religious freedom. Our laws and institutions are conceived in the spirit of that memorable fourteenth article of the Declaration of Rights adopted by the Convention of Virginia on June 12, 1776—an article which we owe to no less statesmen than George Mason, Patrick Henry, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson—'That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it,

can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence, and therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love and charity toward each other.' The Constitution of the United States provides that no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust, and forbids Congress to make any law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. America has no state church. Its citizens cannot be compelled to support the institutions of religion or to attend religious worship; neither can they be restrained from the free exercise and expression of religious belief, so long as they do not interfere with the rights of others or threaten the peace and safety of the state."

### *Denominationalism Fostered*

"One result of this religious freedom has been the perpetuation of distinct religious groups and the multiplication and growth of separately organized religious denominations. America has been less of a melting-pot in this respect, perhaps, than in any other. Those of Jewish birth have here, as in all lands, retained their ancient faith, and Catholics have been loyal to their church, which has grown mightily in this country throughout the last hundred years. Protestant groups also have maintained their several heritages. The Congregational churches have perpetuated the Pilgrim and Puritan tradition and the Episcopal that of the Church of England. Scotch settlers in America established the Presbyterian Church, and Germans, Swedes, and Norse, the Lutheran. The German Reformed Church and the



Dutch Reformed Church have never united. The Baptist and Methodist Churches have attained their greatest growth in this country, and other religious bodies, such as the Disciples of Christ, have originated here.

“Another result of religious freedom has been to make easy the withdrawal from church affiliation or the refusal to ally oneself with any organized religious group. In countries which have a state church, citizenship and church-membership go together, in the absence of positive action to the contrary; here citizenship and church-membership are entirely divorced. Only those, presumably, who really care to do so maintain membership in the churches and many are without church affiliation.

“Yet the great body of American citizens support the churches and synagogues of the communities in which they live, and considerably more than one-half of the population are more or less directly affiliated with religious organizations. It is the judgment of the most competent observers that the principle of religious freedom has strengthened rather than weakened the vitality of organized religion in this country.”

### *A Common Faith*

“Underlying all differences, moreover, America has a common religious faith. Its citizens generally—Protestant, Catholic and Jew—worship one God, Creator of all things and Father of men. They believe that His will has been revealed in the life and literature of the Hebrew people, as this is recorded in the Bible. They acknowledge the principles of human duty set forth in the Ten Commandments, in the teachings of the Hebrew prophets, in the Golden Rule, and in the law of love to God and to fellow man. They assent to the ideals, however

poorly they may practice the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. They hold in high honour the character and teachings of Jesus, though only Christians call Him Lord and Saviour; they sing hymns and psalms which transcend differences of creed.

“This common religious faith of America has inspired our history as a people and is embodied in our most characteristic institutions. It has been affirmed in a significant decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, from which I quote these words: ‘Every State constitution contains language which either directly or by clear implication recognizes a profound reverence for religion and an assumption that its influence in all human affairs is essential to the well-being of the community. . . . There is no dissonance in these declarations. There is a universal language pervading them all and having one meaning. They affirm and reaffirm that this is a religious nation. These are not individual sayings, the declarations of private persons. They are organic utterances. They speak the voice of the entire people.’” This common faith should inspire a common aim.

### *Religion Ignored*

“Yet the surprising fact is that the schools of America do not accord to religion a place commensurate with its importance as a factor in our heritage, as an expression of our common faith, and as a principle under-girding and sustaining our moral well-being. With the exception of the reading of a few verses from the Bible and the recital of the Lord’s Prayer in the schools of some states and communities, the teaching of religion has disappeared from these schools and they afford to children no con-

scious recognition of the part that religion has played and is playing in the life of humanity."

*The Denominations Blamed*

"The public schools are not themselves to blame for this situation. It was forced upon them by the quarrels and protests of the churches, or by folk who assumed to speak in behalf of the churches. Whenever a group, or even an individual, has chosen to object, on what are averred to be conscientious grounds, to some religious element in the program or curriculum of the public schools, that element has forthwith been eliminated, and no other religious element has taken its place. The movement has been almost wholly negative; there has been no coming together of the different religious groups for a positive reconsideration of its total trend and inevitable results. It was not infidels or atheists that stripped the public schools of religion. It was people who spoke in the name of religion. The fact is that adherents of all faiths in America have been far more concerned to see to it that the public schools should not contain any element to which they could object, than they have been to conserve in these schools the great fundamental principles of morals and religion upon which they all agree. Protestant, Catholic and Jew have shared in this movement. All must shoulder some of the responsibility for the situation into which we have drifted.

"I was amazed to read in an announcement of a recent meeting of the Religious Education Association this statement concerning education in the public schools: 'Religious motivation may not be used; the name of God may not be used.' I did not know that

the stripping of religion from the public schools had gone quite so far as that. I do not believe it to be so. Certainly there is nothing in our public constitutions or legislative enactments, federal or state, that compels it to be so. This is not yet a Godless nation. Public school teachers need not fear to take the name of God upon their lips, even in the classroom.

"Yet the error of that statement lies in its exaggeration, rather than in total misrepresentation; in its seeming to assert as a necessary principle what is practically, in too many sections of this country, the fact. The public schools have drifted far toward a complete ignoring of religion and of God."

### *A Great Peril*

"This situation is fraught with danger. It imperils the future of religion among our people, and, with religion, the future of the nation itself. It endangers the perpetuity of the most characteristic and essential principles of American life and American institutions.

"A system of public schools that omits and ignores religion fails to bring children into contact with the best that the experience of the race has to offer. 'Through its schools a nation should become conscious of the abiding sources from which the best movements in its life have always drawn their inspiration,' a contemporary English philosopher of education has said. Professor W. E. Hocking has so well stated the danger in the present situation that I quote his striking sentences. He is referring to the objection which Bertrand Russell voices against 'immersing defenseless children' in the atmosphere of the older generation's faiths, political and religious. Dr. Hocking says: 'The greatest danger of

politically guided education, particularly in democracies which feel themselves obliged in their educational enterprises to cancel out against one another the divergent opinions of various parties, is that the best places will be *left blank*, because it is on the most vital matters that men most differ. Children have rights which education is bound to respect. The first of these rights is not that they be left to choose their way of life, *i. e.*, to make bricks without either straw or clay. Their first right is that they be offered something positive, the best the group has so far found. Against errors and interested propaganda the growing will has natural protection—it has *no protection against starvation.*’ ”

### *Starvation and Poisoning*

“ But the danger is not simply one of omission, of failure to offer to children the best. The present situation tacitly commits the public schools to a negative attitude with respect to the value of religion. To revert to Professor Hocking’s figure, the peril is not simply that of starvation, there is danger of actually poisoning the minds of our children with implied irreligion.

“ The ignoring of religion by the public school inevitably conveys to children a negative suggestion. They cannot help but notice the omission. It is bound to discredit religion in their minds. It is natural for them to conclude that religion is negligible, or unimportant, or irrelevant to the real business of life.

“ The danger is greater to-day than ever before just because the schools are greater to-day than ever before. For the old time public school to omit religion would have been a matter of little consequence, for it omitted a great many things. But the public schools of to-day



are taking on the dimensions of life itself. According to John Dewey, they undertake to afford to children a social environment simpler, purer, wider, better balanced and more rightly proportioned than is afforded by the big, confused and too often sordid world without their bounds. They provide for the education of children in practically every other sound human interest, except religion. The omission and ignoring of religion by such schools conveys a powerful condemnatory suggestion.

"We must keep sectarianism out of our public schools. But that does not necessitate stripping the schools of religion. The distinction between sectarianism and religion is clear to all sensible men and has been maintained in a multitude of decisions made by our courts. The Supreme Court of the United States has said: 'The term religion has reference to one's views of his relations to his Creator, and to the obligations they impose of reverence for His being and character, and of obedience to His will. It is often confounded with the *cultus* or form of worship of a particular sect, but is distinguishable from the latter.'"

### *The Sectarianism of Secularism*

"To exclude religion from the public schools of the United States is to surrender these schools to the sectarianism of atheism or irreligion. If it be right to keep Methodism or Presbyterianism or Catholicism out of the schools, it is right to keep Tom-Paine-ism out. If it be wrong to establish Congregationalism or Lutheranism or Judaism as the religion of the state, it is equally wrong to establish secularism as the religion of the state.

"The principle of religious freedom is designed to pro-

tect religious belief, not to hinder or destroy it. It is meant to insure the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of conscience, not to limit that exercise by forcing secularism upon American citizens. For the state to ignore religion in its schools is to deny religion. And for the state even tacitly to deny religion in its schools is to impair the religious liberty of that vast majority of American citizens who believe in God and desire that the education of their children give proper place to religious belief.

“The tacit denial of religion by our schools imperils the foundations of American life. A recent decision of the Court of Appeals of the State of New York, affirms: ‘That the religious conscience, conviction, and accountability, are the least dispensable foundations for good citizenship and real patriotism.’ This affirmation is in accord with the judgment of George Washington as stated in his memorable ‘Farewell Address to the American People’: ‘Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.’ So spake the first President of the United States. Beside his utterance place the restrained, objective comment made just a few years ago by that keenest of all foreign observers of American life, Lord Bryce: ‘One is startled by the thought of what might befall this huge yet delicate fabric of laws and commerce and social institutions (of America) were the foundation (of religion) it has rested on to crumble away. Suppose that all these men ceased to believe that there was any power above them,

any future before them, anything in heaven or earth but what their senses told them of; suppose that their consciousness of individual force and responsibility, already dwarfed by the overwhelming power of the multitude, and the fatalistic submission it engenders, were further weakened by the feeling that their swiftly fleeting life was rounded by a perpetual sleep. . . . Would the moral code stand unshaken, and with it the reverence for law, the sense of duty toward the community, and even toward the generations yet to come? Would men say: Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die? History cannot answer this question. The most she can tell us is that hitherto civilized society has rested on religion, and that free government has prospered best among religious people.' ”

### *Redeeming Feature*

“I know the answer that is customarily given to those who refer to the defect in our schools which I have been pointing out. It is said that the most potent influence in the life of any school is to be found in the moral and religious character of the teacher. And we are reminded that the public schools of America are not irreligious because their teachers are almost everywhere men and women of strong moral character, and of definite religious convictions. I thank God for that. It is the one redeeming feature of the present situation. Without the definite teaching of religion, or even the mention of religious beliefs, these teachers by the character of their discipline and by the spirit which they maintain in the life of the schools, have been and are of profound influence in determining the character of American boys and girls.”

*Is Right Mere Fashion?*

Dr. Weigle is discussing a vital question as he says:

“There are those who propose that the introduction of what they term ‘character education’ in the public schools will solve the problem. That depends upon the kind of character education that is attempted and the motives to which appeal is made. We stand in woeful need of more direct and vital methods of moral education in these schools. Too long have their administrators and teachers rationalized their neglect of moral education by proclaiming the idea that the right way to educate for character is to deal with concrete moral problems as they arise in the life of the school—an idea which condemns the school to a policy that is merely opportunist, disciplinary and remedial. But we delude ourselves if we imagine that the introduction of non-religious character-education in the public schools will solve the problem or quiet the conscience of those who have waked to the danger of an educational system without religious motivation. Direct character-education but raises the problem of the ultimate sanctions of morality. If the public schools must teach that right is merely what men have agreed upon, nothing more than convention, or fashion, or public opinion, or legal enactment by a majority in some legislature—if they are estopped from saying that some things are right because we believe them to be rooted in the constitution of the universe itself, expressions of the nature and will of God,—the God upon whom our destiny depends—then we are in the presence of a new danger. Shall the state teach that right is mere fashion, and the church that it is discoverable in the very nature of reality? That would be a conflict in the

field of morality beside which the supposed conflict between evolution and Genesis is child's play."

*What Can the Public Schools Do?*

"What, now, have we a right to expect from the state through its schools? Clearly we cannot expect the public schools to undertake a major share of the religious education of American children. This is for two reasons which are so obvious as to need no discussion. First, because a complete religious education could not be offered by the public schools without transgressing the principle of religious freedom; second, because the growth of religion in the mind of a child depends upon a multitude of factors too intimate and too pervasive to be embraced within the limits of organized, formal schooling.

"We have a right to expect the public schools to do more than they have been doing, however. They can take steps to offset or wholly void the negative suggestion involved in the present situation. They can in many states continue the reading from the Bible and the use of the Lord's Prayer—an act of corporate worship in which all religious groups might well agree to unite; and by the careful selection of materials, this practice could be made to be of more religious educational value than it now is. The public schools can and should in all of their teaching refer to religion naturally and wholesomely, without dogmatism, without bias, without affectation or strain. They should in all of their teaching manifest due reverence for God and due respect for religious beliefs. Teachers should understand that the principle of religious freedom is designed to protect rather than to destroy religious belief; and that it gives no right either tacitly to suggest or actually to teach



irreligion. The public school can aim at the development of a citizenship which is founded upon character; and they can in their efforts to educate for character, give due place to religious sanctions. They can teach that morality is more than custom, public opinion or legal enactment; they can point to its grounding in the structure of the universe and in the nature of God. They can afford to the work of the churches and synagogues for the religious education of their children some such recognition as will declare to the children themselves in unmistakable terms that their teachers hold religion to be a proper part of the community's total provision for their education.

"The state is not Godless. It assumes, in many of its declarations and practices, the truth of religious faith—taking due care not to force religious observances upon those who deny them. Why should not the schools of the state assume the truth of that common body of religious faith upon which its citizens generally agree—taking due care, by conscience clauses or other provisions, to conserve the rights of those who have no such faith?"

### *Summary*

Dr. Weigle with force and clearness calls attention to the fact that this nation was founded upon religious principles and that freedom of religious belief and profession was guaranteed for all. This religious freedom has fostered denominationalism which is not an unmixed evil. He also directs our attention to the fact that while there are many denominations, there is yet a common faith in the great fundamental truths of religion. This common faith, which is the religion of the nation, has been ignored, in our public schools. For this the denomi-

nations are largely to blame. He further calls attention to the fact that ignoring of religion in the public schools constitutes a great peril. It means not only the starvation but the poisoning of the religious life of the nation. This danger grows as the public schools develop, become wider in their curriculum and more dominant in their influence. The condition is alarming because to ignore religion is to teach the sectarianism of irreligion, secularism and atheism. He says that "for the state to teach no religion in its schools is to deny religion." He calls attention to the fact that the one redeeming factor is the effort which is being made toward character education. Many teachers of fine Christian character teach religion by example. But he utters a warning against character education which is without the proper religious motivation.

Dr. C. C. Haun gives the result of the investigation of a graduate student of Vanderbilt University with reference to character education in the schools of Tennessee. He reported on the content of the readers in the approved Tennessee list, through the fifth grade. The report reads: "With one exception these readers were produced with child interest as the aim without regard to the child's character development. Stories that interest children and at the same time build finest character traits might have been selected, but more than one-third of the stories in these widely used readers are lacking in character value and in many instances actually detrimental. It seems almost criminal to be giving more space to the teaching of deceit, hate and selfishness than to honesty, but these text-books are doing so."

Dr. Weigle asks the question: "What have we a right to expect from the schools?"

Of course we cannot expect the schools to undertake the major task of religious education. But they should in all their teaching give due reverence to God and respect to religious beliefs. Does not the solution lie in an understanding coöperation of the state and the church, in which the church performs the major task of religious education?

### *The Parochial School*

Many persons have the conviction that the church should control the school. That, of course, involves the question of its support by the church. The parochial school idea has much to commend it and we have nothing to say against it. But to provide educational advantages for all the children in the United States would involve an expenditure far beyond the ability of the church to pay. It would more than absorb all the resources of the church and would dwarf the prime purpose of its task. The rising standards of the public school make the maintenance of the parochial school of equal standards increasingly difficult. Then, those who support the parochial school have the burden of double taxation.

At present there is a very small proportion of the population in the rural districts which has the opportunities and privileges of the parochial school.

### *Church and School Coöperation*

The public school is here, and here to stay. The question is: How can the country church and the rural public school function together?

In the same neighbourhood dwell together the country church and the rural public school. They both should be service institutions. Their tasks are well defined and

distinct, and yet they are closely correlated. The principal services they render are for the same social groups. They are largely supported by the same people. The church majors in religion but cannot ignore education, the school majors in education but must recognize such vital matters as attitudes and character-building, which are determined mainly by religion. May not the shortcomings in our American civilization be due to the failure of the church and school to function together?

Building the finest type of citizens is the main purpose of both church and school. The processes used by each institution need to be geared together so that they may become most powerful and efficient. Both the church and school have responsibilities in meeting the social, recreational and health needs of the community, which make it necessary for them to work out their programs together in order to avoid duplications and conflicts. The unfriendly attitude of either institution toward the other will greatly hinder the development of full-rounded citizenship and the leaders of either should be ready to go the second mile in keeping relationships friendly.

### *Opportunities*

If we have capable ministers in the rural fields who are trained for their task just as the rural school teachers and the agricultural extension agents are trained for their work, it will naturally follow that the churches which they serve will have the right kind of a program which includes teaching.

The country church has greater opportunities of contact with other organizations for the promotion of human betterment than the church in the city. In fact, conditions in the rural areas make coöperation imperative if

the church is to accomplish the task. For over eight years the writer was pastor in the city; following this he spent sixteen years as a country minister. There are such a multiplicity of organizations in the city that it is impossible to coöperate with all of them and the result is that the church becomes an institution largely apart from the currents of the complex urban life. In the rural areas organizations are few and dependent upon the same persons for leadership as those who are active participants in the life of the church. It is easy for the church in the country districts to dominate the policies of other organizations. Here lies a danger which sometimes produces a hurtful reaction. The minister must keep out of sight. It is not wise for a pastor of a country church to accept an office in a community organization unless it be that of chaplain. He may be offered the presidency of the local bank, the farm bureau, the grange, the local fair, the parent-teachers' association, or a school trusteeship, etc. If he is a man of real leadership, strong influence may be brought to bear. It is unwise for him to accept official positions which will consume his time, deplete his energies and involve him in a multitude of activities which do not lie within the range of his major task. "Minister" means "servant" and not "master." He should be willing to lend his aid, sympathy, and coöperation to others who are called upon to lead. He may thus develop leadership in the country community which will react favourably upon the program of his church. The rural church should dominate and determine the character of every other organization in the community, not by dictating policies of administration but by inculcating principles of behaviour. The church is a service institution and was



never intended to lord its authority over men or organizations.

### *Functions of the Church Defined*

The church in character is spiritual. Its functions are religious and not secular. Its task is to inspire worship, declare the Word, teach religion and practice the principles of Jesus. There are some who seem to think that the church should busy itself about everything. There are some things the church cannot do. There are many things the church must do when there is no other agency to perform them. When there are no schools, it becomes necessary for the church to establish and maintain them in order to do its own work. But if good schools are sustained by the state or some other agency, it is not necessary for the church to teach arithmetic, geography, grammar, and kindred subjects. It should use its resources to exercise its functions according to the commission given by Christ. A very important function of the church is that of teaching, but it is its primary business to teach religion. Jesus said: "Teaching them (not the sciences, etc., but) to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

John Frederic Oberlin was justified in establishing and maintaining schools, teaching agriculture, building good roads, etc., as they were necessary auxiliaries in order to promote the Kingdom of God among the backward people of the Vosges Mountains in Alsatia. If Oberlin were living to-day he would approach his problem according to the exigencies of present day conditions. Schools, medical missions, agricultural missions and other enterprises in this day are necessary in foreign lands if the church is to function. In certain underprivileged com-

munities in America some of these things must be operated, but such communities are growing less in number.

When the church undertakes to do too many things it dissipates its funds, man-power and energies, and leaves fewer resources to concentrate upon the spiritual task to which it is divinely called.

But life cannot be divided into compartments. Man is a religious being and everything which concerns human welfare calls for an exercise of religious influence. This makes it necessary for the church to coöperate with other agencies in order that religion may make its contributions which cannot be provided by secular organizations. God is challenging the church in the rural areas to make the communities which constitute the source of the nation's supply, Christian in fact and in principle. So long as this be true, we will have our faces toward the morning of a better day. Is this not the challenge for an adventure? It is to furnish a program that will provide adequate religious privileges for all the peoples of all the rural communities. The challenge is not only to the country churches but also to the churches in the cities which have the resources that are necessary to support an adequate ministry in the rural areas.

We believe the church can maintain its spiritual character and perform its divinely appointed commission and yet coöperate with other agencies that are functioning for human betterment.

There is nothing which touches human life that ought not to be dominated by the church, not dominated by ecclesiastic fiat, church administration or coercion, or even by resolutions, but dominated by the great religious principles which the church is commissioned to promulgate. The public school majors in education but cannot

get away from economics, health and religion. The health service majors in health but cannot ignore religion, economics and education. The agricultural extension service majors in economics, but must recognize the importance of an emphasis being placed upon religion, health and education. The church majors in religion and promulgates its principles which are necessary to maintain all of human welfare and undergird the structure of society. But in order to fulfil best its divine commission, it must not only recognize these other organizations as valuable auxiliaries but as agencies with which it must exercise wise and full coöperation. The church is not the Kingdom of God, but it is the divinely instituted society for the coming and the promotion of that Kingdom. Every right-thinking man and woman must recognize the value of the rural church to the state and to society as a whole, and should therefore contribute liberally to its establishment and maintenance.

But in the cities the churches not only have to a degree an adequate program of religious education in their Sunday church schools and in their vacation Bible schools, but in many cities by the churches working coöperatively there are well established programs in week day religious education.

With very few exceptions adequate programs of religious education have not been put on in the rural areas. This is due mainly to the lack of equipment and trained, resident leadership. National regeneration cannot come from the cities. The country communities are the sources of the nation's supply. A large proportion of children are in the country. If the high hopes of the founders of the nation are to be fulfilled and America in the future be dominated by lofty ideals and noble

purposes, the rural schools and the rural churches must coöperate, to provide religious training. They have their separate functions but they must coöperate.

### *The Church May Learn from the School*

In projecting a program of religious education, there are some things which the country church may learn from the rural school. The country church and the rural school are facing, in many respects, the same problems and have, to some extent, identical aims. They should be asking themselves the questions: How can good citizenship and sound character be developed? How can the modern needs of society best be met? There are many parallels which may be drawn by the rural church and the rural school. In the modern rural school program we find the application of many methods that might be adopted by the church.

In improving rural school facilities, it has been found necessary to make a survey of all educational facilities—building needs, facts about the teaching staff, the efficiency of instruction, the adaptation of instruction to local conditions, etc., etc. The survey of the community which consists of the discovery of the local teachers, county superintendents and school supervisors, is studied, digested and compared with other situations by an experienced staff. This helps to determine the needs of a school in a particular community. In the same way the minister and his co-workers may make a survey of his parish. They may study the community or the parish area in order to discover the material and spiritual conditions, the social groupings of the population, the materials on which the church has to work, the materials with which it has to work. This will enable the church

to define its task and project its program in accordance with its needs, opportunities and resources.

The rural public school has found it necessary, in order to meet the needs of all the young people, to place less emphasis upon certain traditional studies and to introduce courses that deal with civics and government, courses in history that interpret the past in terms of the present, physical and health-education courses providing for the physical well-being through recreational devices; courses in vocational education to meet the occupational needs of rural boys and girls and to give them an appreciation of the possibilities of a well-ordered life of usefulness in the country. These courses are built upon a careful study of local conditions. In the same way the rural church, based upon the findings of conditions in the parish may be able to project a program of worship, preaching, religious education and recreational activities. There are great possibilities for religious education in coöperative arrangements which may be made with the public school, by which the minister and the other church workers may offer courses in religious education in the schools. The rural minister who is alive and inspired by the example of Christ's life need have no fear of a dying country church. The minister who applies Christ's teaching to the problems of present-day living will have an effective ministry. It is a question with him and his church of adapting the program to the vital needs, as is the case with the successful rural school.

While the training of our teachers, both rural and urban, is not yet adequate, each year witnesses higher requirements for teachers, and a better trained group at work. More and more teachers do not confine their activities to the four walls of the classroom but are



becoming a vital factor in the lives of their pupils and the parents. In addition to a high degree of cultural requirement in the present-day teacher, they have extended courses in the technique of their profession. Those who are to teach in the rural areas are required to take special training in rural problems which grow out of rural conditions. The need for rural teachers of native ability with sound fundamental as well as specialized training applies with even greater force to the rural minister.

The officials of the public school system have found it desirable to employ experts in various phases of school work to go from school to school and community to community to advise with school officers and teachers about their problems. The increased efficiency in the public school system during the last few years has come about largely through these supervisors. No money has been spent by the state which has yielded larger returns in efficiency than that which goes to the support of these men and women.

The city churches have money enough at their disposal to pay salaries which attract able ministers and provide support for religious educational experts. Most of the rural churches are poor—many of them have no pastors at all. Most of the denominations have what we would term rural church executives, such as the presiding elders, superintendents, religious educational directors, etc., whose services are at the disposal of the rural churches.

Some of the denominations also have selected directors of country church work, who promote their interests, challenging and training their leadership for the whole denomination. For instance, Dr. Mark A. Dawber, of the Methodist Episcopal Church; Dr. Warren H. Wilson,

of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.; Dr. Edwin E. Sundt, of the Northern Baptist Church, and a number of others. There is no limit to the constructive work that these men may accomplish, provided they receive the right kind of coöperation from their denomination-at-large and the country pastors and their congregations for whose benefit they have been appointed.

The public school building program which is being carried out by many states for the rural areas should prove an inspiration and example to the church. If it is necessary to have buildings to care for the mental and physical health of the pupils, to have separate rooms for each class out of sight and out of sound of the other classes for the teaching of secular subjects, how much more important it is that our country churches should have ample equipment which will enable them to meet their needs for a program of worship, preaching, religious education and recreation for all the people of the community.

Many of the states are providing an equalization fund. This is a plan by which the areas which are rich in the number of children and poor in taxable property may share in the same educational privileges as those areas which are few in children and rich in taxable assets. By a recent enactment in North Carolina, the state assumes the entire cost for a six-months school term. If any county wishes a longer term, it can conduct it with funds derived from local assessment.

In an address delivered before the State Teachers' Association, November, 1931, by Dr. Sidney B. Hall, Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Virginia, he advocated that \$2,000,000 annually be added to the all too small present equalization fund of the

state. Among other things he said: "An increase of two millions of dollars of state funds would make it possible, not necessarily desirable, for local school divisions to decrease their taxes for schools to the extent of the increased amount of money that they secure from state sources." Dr. Hall is a leading educator of the new school.

The state of North Carolina has an equalization fund of \$6,600,000. Not long ago I was in a county in North Carolina, where sixty school buses were delivering all the farm-children in the county to nine-month consolidated high schools.

In Virginia, where the equalization fund is very small, 25 per cent of the money which supports the rural schools is provided by taxes raised in the cities, but according to Hamilton and Garnett, of the Department of Sociology at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, only 3 per cent of the budget which supports the rural churches is provided out of the missionary fund contributed by the city churches in Virginia. In many other states, the percentage of the cost of rural schools which is borne by the cities is more, and the cost of the support of the rural churches borne by the city churches less, than in Virginia. The equalization fund in the public school system guarantees to the child living in the most remote rural section the same sort of educational opportunity enjoyed by the child of the more prosperous rural community or even of the urban centre. It is the inalienable right of every American child to have an equal chance for education. The rural child should be provided with religious privileges equal to those which are enjoyed by the child of the urban areas. If the rural church is to perform its task of religious education in co-

operation with the public school, it must be assisted by the people of the wealth-congested centres.

Dr. Dabney S. Lancaster, Dean of Men of the University of Alabama, an Episcopal layman, in speaking on this subject says: "Rural people are entitled to as fine preaching, rural children are entitled to as fine religious instruction as are city dwellers. In fact, our country will lose beyond repair in substantial citizenship if the rural school and the rural church fail to provide these necessities. Even rural ministers are sometimes human! They must provide to some degree for their families; they must labour where results can be secured. The country cannot hold them unless the entire church is fair to them. Therefore, it becomes incumbent upon the denomination to consider ways and means of providing an equalization fund to guarantee a fair living to the minister and fair working conditions. The time has passed when the country preacher should be largely dependent upon charity for a living. He loses in independence of thought and action, and the community loses in leadership. An equalization fund involves a careful study of every situation so that support from a general fund can be based upon *actual need*, taking into consideration the ability of the local church group to support itself. The wealthy city church must agree eventually to such a program even from a selfish standpoint, or else its own work will be hampered by those who go to the cities from rural districts where opportunities for development have been limited."

It is evident that the churches more and more are laying emphasis on providing religious opportunities and privileges for their students in the state-supported schools. In some of the states credit work in religious

education in the high schools is being done by Christian teachers, supported by the church. The University of Virginia accepts one credit unit on the Bible. There are about one thousand students in high schools in Virginia receiving instruction of this kind. Some of them are in schools located in rural areas.

The most practical way in which the rural school and the country church can coöperate for the promotion of a social order and the production of a higher type of men and women is in the week day church schools, discussed in a previous chapter.

### *The Master Teacher*

In answer to Dr. Weigle's question: What have we a right to expect from the state through its schools? our answer would be: recognition of the importance of religion and coöperation with the church whose principal function is that of teaching religion. If religion is to be adequately taught in the rural areas of America it must be done by the rural church. It is, however, not enough to teach the forms of religion and deny its truths. We cannot substitute mere respectability for repentance. Many men are respectable who have wrong attitudes. Repentance means a change of mind—a change from wrong attitudes toward life, toward man and toward God. Christian education teaches that mere decencies of life are not enough if we fail to possess the dynamics of religion. "By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Not by his own efforts but by an influence outside of himself, does a man become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Reformation is not enough unless it is the product of regeneration. Reformations which religious teachings produce are



desirable and important, but Jesus taught that man must be born again. Nicodemus was the teacher of Israel, probably the greatest teacher of religious education of his city. But Jesus said to him: "Ye must be born again."

We learn by doing, but more than the practices of religion are necessary. We cannot substitute practice for power. Christ said to His disciples: "Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high," and the risen Christ said to His disciples: "After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, then shall ye be witnesses unto me." Men may be conversant with the statements of religion, but unless they have actually experienced the benefits of the truths of religion they cannot share it with others. We must have shared religion ourselves before we can share it with others. The Christian religion not only teaches the way of life but provides the power by which men are enabled to walk in that way. Men and women who teach the religion of Jesus must learn from the Master Teacher. They must be willing to go with Him all the way.

I close this book with a quotation from an address which Dr. Walter L. Lingle made before the Institute of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, on the evening of July 5, 1931.

"The Master Teacher loved the truth. He said: 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' Again He said: 'When the spirit of truth is come he will guide you into all truth.' No teacher ever placed more emphasis upon truth than Jesus. He was the very incarnation of truth. On one occasion He said: 'I am the truth.' He was especially interested in truth that made for righteousness. In fact, He was so profoundly

concerned about the truth that He taught that He was ready to die for it.

"I have read somewhere that a young philosopher once went to Prince Talleyrand and told him that he had invented a new religion and asked Talleyrand's opinion of it. Talleyrand asked him to leave his manuscript with him for examination and to return in a few days. When the young philosopher returned, Talleyrand complimented his paper rather highly, but said that he would like to ask a question. The young philosopher told him to ask it. The Prince asked: 'Do you believe in your new religion enough to be crucified for it?' The young man was not sure that he did. Then said the Prince: 'You might as well burn your manuscript.'

"The Master Teacher taught with authority and conviction, and was not only willing to die for His gospel, but actually did so. That gives us some idea of His devotion to truth."









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